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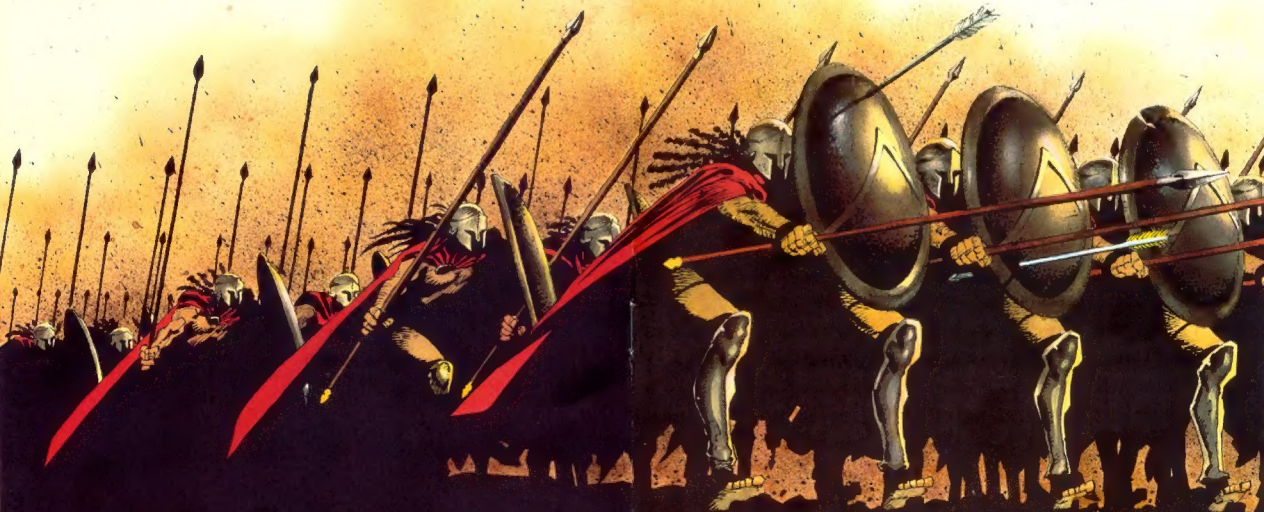
1 of 5

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MILLER
LYNN
VARLEY**



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**FRANK
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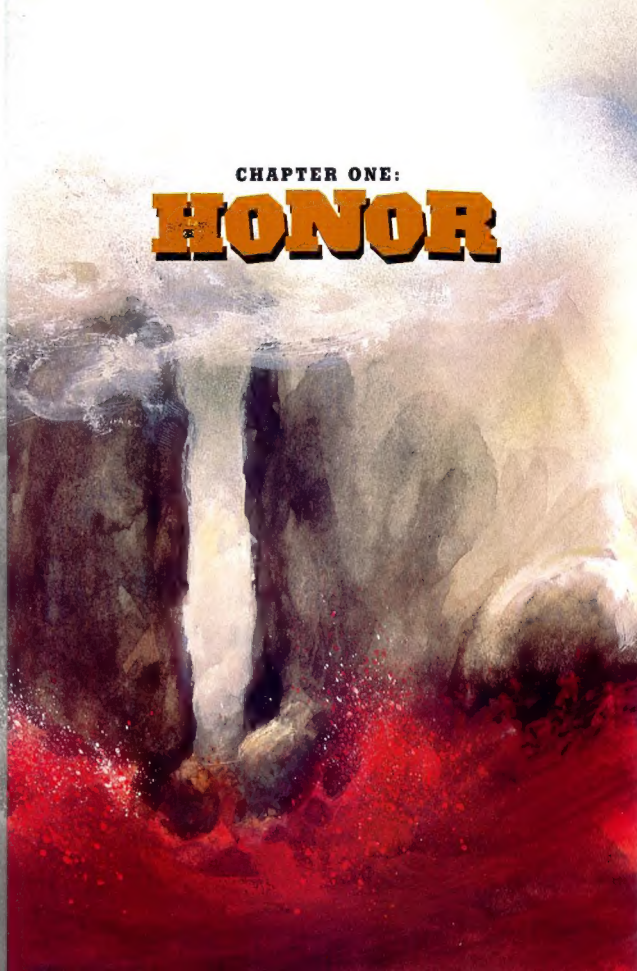
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**LYNN
VARLEY**

LOGO DESIGN
**STEVE MILLER
& CYNTHIA JOHNSON**

PUBLICATION DESIGN
MARK COX

EDITOR
DIANA SCHUTZ

CHAPTER ONE:
HONOR



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PRINTED IN CANADA



WE
MARCH.

FROM DEAR
LAKONIA--

--FROM SACRED
SPARTA--

--WE
MARCH.





FOR
HONOR'S
SAKE--

--FOR
GLORY'S
SAKE--

--WE
MARCH.

480 B.C.



THREE
DAYS OUT.

MERCILESS
HEAT.

THROATS
GO DRY.

YOUNG **STELIOS**
GETS *DIZZY*.

UNPARDONABLE

WHOO!

STELIOS.
YOU
CLOWN.

YES,
SIR.

I'M READY FOR
MY PUNISHMENT,
SIR.

KRAK

WHUUK

WE WONDER
IF **STELIOS**
WILL DIE.

ONLY ONE
AMONG US
CAN STOP
THIS.

ONLY
ME

ENOUGH.

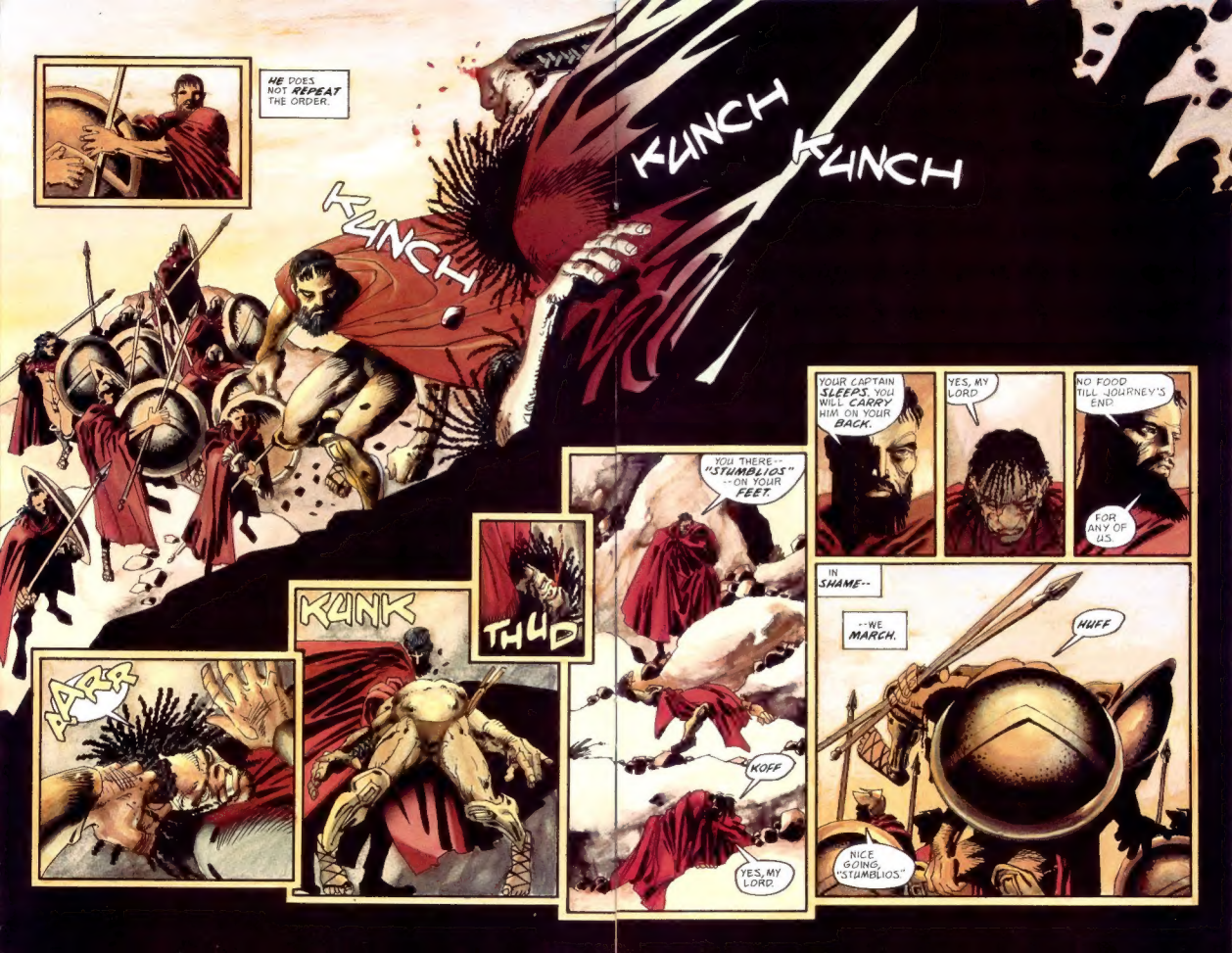
BUT THE
CAPTAIN
DOESN'T
HEAR.

WHUUK

KRAK



HE DOES
NOT REPEAT
THE ORDER.



KUNCH

KUNCH

KUNCH

KANK

THUD



AAA



YOU THERE--
"STUMBLIOS"
--ON YOUR
FEET.

KOFF

YES, MY
LORD.



YOUR CAPTAIN
SLEEPS. YOU
WILL CARRY
HIM ON YOUR
BACK.

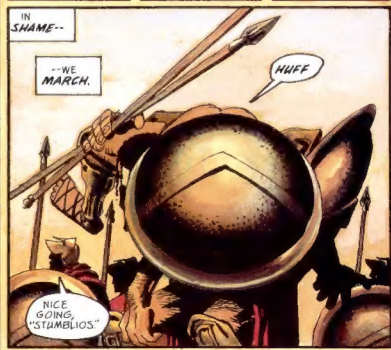


YES, MY
LORD



NO FOOD
TILL JOURNEY'S
END

FOR ANY OF
US



IN
SHAME--

--WE
MARCH.

HUFF

NICE
GOING--
"STUMBLIOS"

NIGHT. THE SUMMER
WIND BLOWS. COOL
OFF THE AEGEAN.

DILIOS
TURNS HIS
STORIES.

TRAINING
CAN MAKE A MAN
A GOOD WARRIOR
— BUT A GREAT
WARRIOR IS CRAFTED
BY THE GODS.

OUR
FAVORITE
STORY.

THE ONE
ABOUT
THE BOY.

HE WAS COLD.
THE BOY WAS
COLD. HUNGRY.

IT WAS
HIS INITIA-
TION. HIS
TIME IN THE
WILD.

HE WOULD
RETURN AS A
SPARTAN—OR
NOT AT ALL.

HE HAD WAN-
DERED FAR
FROM SPARTA.
FAR FROM
HOME.

HE HEARD A
LOW GROWL.

HE'D SUR-
VIVED ON
ROOTS
AND BUGS
AND RO-
DENTS—
AND NOW
HE WAS
FREEZ-
ING TO DEATH.

COLD. HUNGRY. FAR FROM
HOME. DEFENSELESS.

DEFENSELESS. THE
SCRAWNY STICK HE'D
SHARPENED—IT WAS
NOTHING. A JOKE.
A CHILD'S TOY MAS-
QUERADING AS A
PROPER SPEAR.

HE WAS
DEFENSELESS.

HE WAS
PREY.



THE BEAST CIRCLED,
SNIFFING, SAVORING
THE SCENT OF THE
MEAL TO COME

DID THE
BOY RUN?
DID HE COWER?
DID HE CRY?



NO!

NOT THIS
MOM

HE
SHOWED
THE WOLF
HIS BACK-
SIDE



HE WAS
CALM.



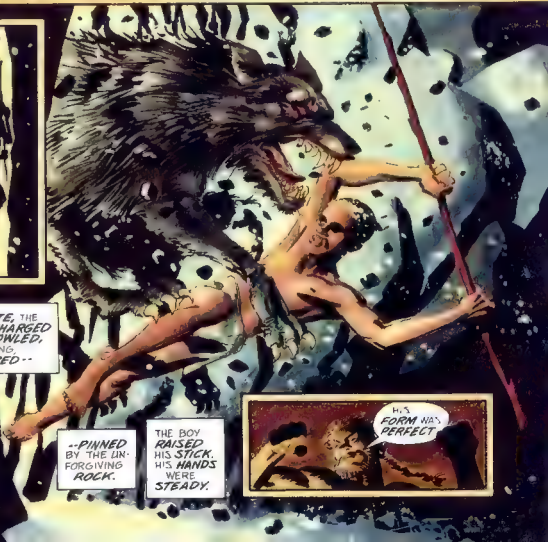
NOT A
TRACE
OF FEAR
DID HE
SHOW



THE WIND
SCREAMED
THROUGH
A NARROW
WOUND
IN THE
ROCK



TOO LATE, THE
BEAST CHARGED
AND HOWLED,
THRASHING,
TRAPPED--



--PINNED
BY THE UN-
FORGIVING
ROCK.

THE BOY
RAISED
HIS STICK.
HIS HANDS
WERE
STEADY.



IT'S
FORM HIS
PERFECT





WE SLEEP
THE KING IS
ALONE WITH
HIS THOUGHTS.

ALONE
WITH THE
WEIGHT OF
A WORLD
ON HIS
SHOULDERS

IT HAS BEEN
MORE THAN
FORTY YEARS
SINCE THE
WOLF AND THE
WINTER COLD
NOW AS THEN,
IT IS NOT
FEAR THAT
GRIPS HIM.

NO NOT FEAR. ONLY
A RESTLESSNESS, A
HEIGHTENED SENSE
OF THINGS. THE ROCKY
SOIL BENEATH HIS
FEET. THE SALTY
GREECE, THE SNOR-
ING AND SHALLOW
BREATHING OF THE
THREE HUNDRED BOYS
IN HIS CHARGE—READY
TO DIE FOR HIM WITH
OUT A MOMENT'S
PAUSE, EVERY ONE
OF THEM

READY
TO DIE.
HE MUSES
THEY
THINK
THEY
KNOW
WHAT
THAT
MEANS.

NOW AS THEN, A
BEAST APPROACHES,
PATIENT, CONFIDENT,
SAVORING THE
MOMENT TO COME BUT
THIS BEAST IS MADE
OF MEN AND HORSES
AND SPEARS AND
SWORDS. IT IS AN
ARMY, YAST BEYOND
IMAGINING, READY
TO DEVOUR TINY
GREECE—TO SNUFF
OUT THE WORLD'S
ONE HOPE FOR
REASON AND
JUSTICE.

THE BEAST
APPROACHES
AND IT WAS
KING LEONIDAS
HIMSELF WHO
PROVOKED
IT

BARELY A
YEAR AGO



BARELY A
YEAR AGO

SPARTA

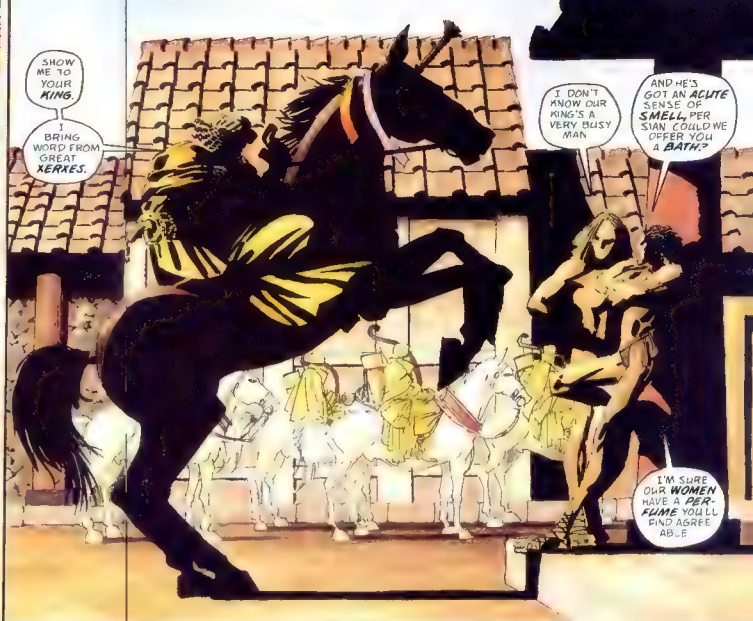
UNINVITED
GUESTS

SHOW
ME TO
YOUR
KING.

I
BRING
WORD FROM
GREAT
KERES.

GREEK
ARROGANCE
IT WILL BE
THE DEATH
OF YOU
ALL.

BE
AFRAID,
SPARTA WILL
BURN TO THE
GROUND, ONLY THE
WORD OF KING
LEONIDAS CAN
SAVE IT



I DON'T
KNOW OUR
KING'S A
VERY BUSY
MAN

AND HE'S
GOT AN ACUTE
SENSE OF
SMELL, PER
SIAN, COULD WE
OFFER YOU
A BATH?

I'M SURE
OUR WOMEN
HAVE A PER-
FECT TIME YOU'LL
FIND AGREE
ABLE

HE SOUNDS
SERIOUS,
MAYBE WE
SHOULD
TELL THE
KING

YEAH,
I SUPPOSE
WE DON'T WANT
ANYBODY SAVING
SPARTANS
AREN'T GOOD
HOSTS.

THE MATCHED
FOOTSTEPS
OF THE KING'S
PERSONAL
GUARD.

THE CLATTER
AND DICHER-
ING OF THE
MARKETPLACE
CEASE.

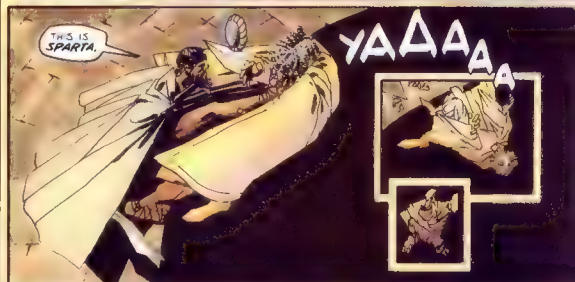
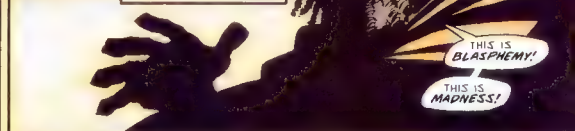
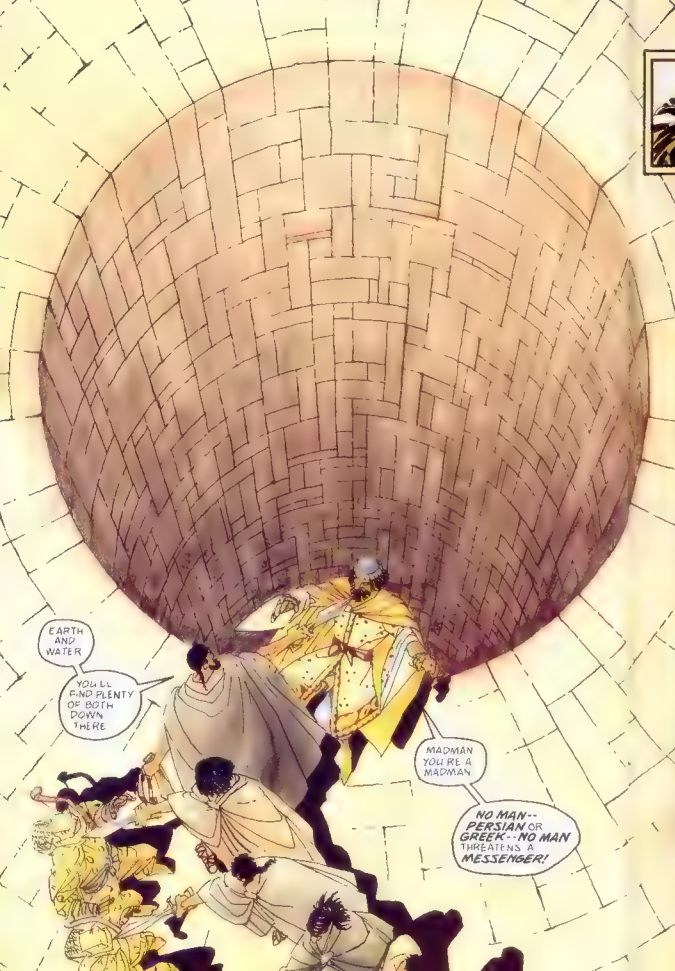
DARELY A
YEAR AGO

EARTH AND
WATER? YOU
RODE ALL THE WAY
FROM PERSIA
FOR EARTH AND
WATER?

DON'T BE
COY. DON'T BE
STUPID. YOU
CAN AFFORD
NEITHER.

A
FORCE OF
MEN IS ASSEM-
BLED--SO MAS-
SIVE IT SHAKES
THE EARTH WITH
ITS MARCH--ITS
NUMBERS SO
GREAT IT DRINKS
THE RIVERS
DRY.





SLINGS & ARROWS

10054 SE Main Street, Portland, OR 97206
e-mail: dianas@dhorse.com

Editor Diana Schutz circulated a few photocopies of this issue to get people talking — and writing. Please join in — and you don't have to be as kind as these good folks were. Honest.

— FM

Michael C. McClelland
Hollywood, CA

I was coming home from work. Tired. Exhausted. Grumpy. I checked the mail. A package from Dark Horse? I ripped open the package as I ran up the stairs. I was stunned at what I saw. Big beautiful art with exquisite painted color. I walked through the door and immediately plopped on the floor and read it. I couldn't stop myself. Suddenly I was having a great day

It is all double-page spreads, but unlike the typical "pinup"-type double-page spreads we usually see, these are more like separate paintings that tell a sequential story. This is some of the best stuff I have seen from Frank Miller. The art is very fresh and alive. Finely detailed. Powerful. Passionate. The colors by Lynn Varley are vibrant. Luscious. These two have actually surpassed their work on *Ronin*. The story itself is very tight and well-paced. At first you think you are going to read this like a simple coloring book, but before you know it, Frank has drawn you back to 480 B.C., into ancient Greece. By the end, I turned the last page and found myself *craving* more.

This is Frank Miller at the top of his game. For Frank Miller fans it is not to be missed. For those not so enamored with Frank — this will change your mind

Most artists would be happy with any one of Frank Miller's many creations, but Frank continues to grow and stretch his talent to new limits. Just when you think you've seen all Frank's tricks, he produces new and more exciting ones. 300 suggests to me a comic book that perhaps Akira Kurosawa might have done if he were an artist of comic books

300 is a perfect example of what an artist can achieve when free to take blank canvas and work it without censors, restrictions, and ratings. Frank Miller, you are a living testament to the importance of preserving our First Amendment rights.

Ben Varkentine
Seattle, WA

Damn. That was my reaction to the first couple

pages of the preview copy of 300. And I mean that in a good, admiring way. The opening pages are so sparsely (appropriately) written that I focused on the drawing, and I particularly took time to absorb the use of color, especially in the backgrounds. If, as Diana says in her letter, these Xerox color copies (good enough on their own) do not do justice to Lynn's colors, then I am very curious to see them in the series.

As the story began to gather steam, I spent less time lingering on the drawings and more following the story. The "caption" giving the time frame is very nicely done. The shadow makes it seem very three-dimensional. I might even wonder if any of the soldiers will look up and see it.

The fight involving "Stumblos," the king, and the captain is powerful. And the sound effects are more disconcerting than any gore could ever be.

The story of the boy and the wolf is good, as well. The telling of it is vivid, in such a way that it tells us something not just about the boy who became king, but the men who follow and celebrate him. And his reaction tells us more: that he can be a good and humble king, concerned with the well-being of his men, above his own tribute — which makes the revelation that he started the war they are marching into a bit of a shocker.

Equally vivid is the messenger's arrival in Sparta. From what is — after all — only a few lines and colors, I can see the whole thing in my mind and get an idea of the kind of place Sparta is

A word about the double-page spread format. I've mentioned in letters to *Sin City*'s lettercol that I admire the way you've taken criticized facets of comics in recent years — pinups that replace storytelling — and shown how they can work without sacrificing art and craft. Here, you blow everything you've ever done in that regard out of the water

To sum up: in the early pages I had my breath taken away by the drawing and colors, but by the end I was sucked in by the story. I can say — and there's no exaggeration here — that when I turned the last page my honest reaction was: what do you mean I have to wait 'til *June* to find out what happens next?

Thanks for the good work, Frank

Kurt A. Meyer
Beech Grove, IN

You break the rules. You ignore the status quo. You shake things up. You have the guts to tell the

stories you want to tell. I have often wondered what a war comic would be like if you and Lynn Varley were involved. Now I know.

300 is a war comic, but a war comic unlike any ever seen. 300 breaks the rules, because no one does war comics today. 300 is not the status quo, because never before has a story like this been done in this medium. 300 shakes things up. Imagine using a double-page spread to showcase a story this grand in scale, rather than using it as an excuse for pinups of gun-toting, big-breasted women in impossible poses. Most of all, 300 shows a lot of guts because, as I said, this is uncharted territory. No comic has ever come together quite like this before.

Over the course of three wonderful double-page spreads you set a tone. "We march" are the words that are repeated over and over. Three hundred men march for honor and glory, and instantly I am among them. When Stelios stumbles and is chastised, I feel his weariness and pain. As the 300 listen to the epic of Leonidas, I smell the campfire and hear Dilios' voice in my mind. The great battle we know is coming is foreshadowed in the tale of the young man who will be king, and a chill runs down my spine. Then, a recollection of a pivotal moment in history as seen first-hand:

"This is *blasphemy!* This is *madness!*"

"This is *Sparta.*"

Thank you both. *This is comics!*

Joe Hollon
Wilmington, OH

The first thing 300 brings to my mind is the verisatality of your storytelling. In a year's time you have taken your readers through the streets of Basin City, flown us in a spaceship to save the world, and now we find ourselves preparing for a battle between ancient Sparta and Persia. Not many comics professionals cover such broad topics in their entire careers. And through all the many settings of your stories the thing you do consistently that separates you from your many contemporaries is to make your readers feel the emotions of your characters. In 300 #1 this emotion came when King Leonidas was shown walking among his sleeping troops. "Ready to die, he muses. *They think they know what that means.*" Then that page ends with a description of their opponents, the "army, vast beyond *imagining*, ready to devour tiny Greece — to snuff out the world's one hope for reason and justice." A small army of 300 Spartans against the unimaginable might of 300,000 Persians — it seems hopeless. It seems not even worthy of attention. But I know they are characters from a Frank Miller comic, and they won't go down without a fight! I can't wait for issue #2.

Michael Hendricks
Kingsville, TX

There are so many skillful achievements in 300 #1, I hardly know where to begin. The dim pallor of the sky at the very beginning gives way to the illuminant brilliance of a new dawn adorning the Spartans' crossing of a hill. The hunched posture of Leonidas as he approaches the "punishment" of the fallen soldier, resembling the lowered gaze of the

ravenous wolf in the next scene, heightens the power of the king's menacing gaze. Only the soldier's blade reflects light in the darkness of the camp. The debris surrounding the thrashing of the trapped wolf depicts this violent action much more perfectly than any sound effects. Young Leonidas returning home, his head turned aside not in surprise but in expectation (the exact same way he greeted the wolf), elevates his stature to that of true myth: a god among mortals. The Persian riders behind the messenger bear the same colors as the sky around them, as if they were ghostly apparitions arriving out of nothingness. The vivid contrast between the simple dress of the Spartans and the elaborate clothing of the Persians expertly reveals the profound differences between these two societies: one harsh, the other avuncular. The final shot of the Persians being forced into the deep pit holds all of the feverish energy of live animation.

The employment of words and images throughout is very sparse, your craft becoming closer to that of a poet rather than a mere "director." Black is used heavily (no surprise there!), making Lynn's job exceedingly difficult in places, yet she makes it look effortless, accomplishing more with several colors than most could accomplish with dozens. This book may receive criticism. I can only hope its critics will recognize what it does before ripping it: it takes an ancient story and makes it relevant today, by using techniques worthy of study by artists and fans alike.

Or, in other words: you and Lynn still kill the chicken!

And on another subject entirely . . .

Bruce Garrett
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

I have been reading and enjoying *Sin City* since *The Big Fat Kill*, and your letters column has given me food for thought. Although I agree with most of your viewpoints, there are some things I've thought about that I would like you to consider.

First of all, it is true that there are no ratings systems or cover advisories in the publishing world. But a most likely reason is that most kids haven't been reading literature for the last few decades — at least not since electronic media have been around. Oh, sure, they'll read if it's a homework assignment, but that's it. Why read a book when you can watch the TV adaptation? Now, imagine if kids had been devouring literature the same way they now devour McRoadkill, Spice Girl pap, and superhero comics. I would bet my left nut that a ratings system of some kind would have been slapped down by now. I'm sure the pro-censor forces would want to prevent the possibility of a 12-year-old boy getting morally corrupted by the latest Jackie Collins fuckfest. As a result, all Douglas Coupland novels and the latest issue of *Spin* would have PG-13 slapped all over their covers.

As for cover advisories in comics, I have no use for them now. On the other hand, if DC didn't use the "Suggested for Mature Readers" advisory on all of its Vertigo books, do you think they would even dare publish comic books like *Preacher* or *The Invisibles*? The same guys who are well known to

the public at large for publishing all-ages fare like *Looney Tunes*, *Superman*, and *Flash*? I doubt it, and I'm personally thankful they did. You should be, too. After all, it was "mature" DC books such as *Sandman* and *Hellblazer* that introduced me to types of comic books other than the superhero slugfests. If I hadn't read these books and discovered what was possible with the comic book as an art form, I probably wouldn't even have bothered with independent books like *Sin City*. No, I'd still be reading nothing more than the latest X-crement. There likely are other people like me who owe their acquired tastes for independent comic books to DC's "Suggested for Mature Readers" Vertigo line.

I agree with your stance that the Comics Code Authority should be taken to the lake in a sack with a heavy rock. However, I read somewhere recently that large retail chains, such as Wal-Mart, Safeway, and 7-11, will sell only Code-approved books. No big deal if you're an urbanite, since there are plenty of comics stores to choose from. But for those living in Wanker, Missouri, or Bumblefuck, Saskatchewan, the local Safeway or 7-11 is the only place in town where one can buy comic books. If you were Marvel or DC, would you not want to sell comic books to the rural/small-town audience? I think that in order to kill the Code, these mega-chains and their distributors have to wake up and realize what comic books are all about these days and who are buying them. Convince the Wal-Marts to drop the Code, and the Big Two will likely follow suit. This may be an undertaking of a decidedly uphill nature, since these stores are notorious for selling censored versions of CDs (Nirvano's *In Utero* comes to mind) and banning magazines like *Playboy*. Powerful retailers are just as bad as politi-

cians when it comes to censorship. By the way, how do non-Code comic book publishers like Dark Horse market their comic books to people living in Wrinkletit, Arkansas, or other little one-horse towns where there are no comics stores?

To me, DC's "advisories" are just plain silly, since they work so hard designing their covers to make it obvious what isn't for kids. Do you think you'd even notice if that diamond-point-type apology were missing?

And, oh, that damn Comics Code. You try soaping it out, you try scrubbing it out . . . Word is, newsstand distributors and those clowns at Wal-Mart have put the squeeze on comics publishers, including Dark Horse. Their timing was good, for them at least: with the direct market in disarray, losing newsstand sales could mean the death of many a title. Leave us say the thugs won.

But you won't be seeing that cancerous stamp on any of my books.

Thanks to all for writing. See you next issue.

— Frank Miller

Next issue:

DUTY



FRANK MILLER

FAMILY VALUES

IT'S A HEAD-ON
COLLISION
BETWEEN MIHO
AND THE
MOBI!

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PUBLICATION DESIGN
MARK COX

EDITOR
DIANA SCHUTZ

CHAPTER TWO:

DUTY





NO. NO SLEEP
TONIGHT NOT
FOR THE KING.

TOO RESTLESS.
EAGER AS A
YOUTH--EAGER
AS A BEARLESS,
WETNOSED
CADET--FOR
BATTLE.

BATTLE STILL
MILES AND DAYS
DISTANT

RESTLESS. FRUSTRATED.
ALL HIS FIFTY YEARS
HAVE BEEN A STRAIGHT
ROAD TO THIS ONE GLEAM-
ING MOMENT OF DESTINY--
THIS ONE RADIANT CLASH
OF SHIELD AND SPEAR AND
SWORD AND BONE AND
FLESH AND BLOOD.

STILL
DAYS
AWAY

AND THOUGH
HE LEADS HIS
PRECIOUS
THREE HUN-
DRED TO CERTAIN
DEATH--HIS
ONLY REGRET
IS THAT HE HAS
SO FEW TO
SACRIFICE

EVERY SPARTAN--
MAN OR WOMAN--
SHOULD SHARE IN
THIS GLORY AND IN
THE VICTORY THAT
WOULD'VE BEEN
SECURED, HAD NOT
KING LEONIDAS BEEN
SO ROUNDLY
THWARTED.

THWARTED--BY
A FOE WHO SQUATS
AMONG THE SUMMER
CLOUDS, AS ROUND
AND FAT AS SOME
GLUTTONOUS
ATHENIAN.



REMEMBER



TWO
WEEKS
AGO

ABOVE
SPARTA

A HARD
CLIMB

A comic book page featuring a large illustration of Leonidas and Ephors in a cave. Leonidas, on the left, is a bearded man in a dark robe, looking up at Ephors. Ephors, on the right, is a man in a white and black striped robe, holding a torch and looking down at Leonidas. The cave is dark with jagged rock formations. Two speech bubbles are present in the top left. A small inset panel in the bottom left shows a close-up of a man's face with the word 'KANK' and 'KLINK' below it. A larger inset panel in the bottom center shows a close-up of a man's face with a speech bubble. On the right side, there is a smaller illustration of Ephors and another figure in a cave, with a speech bubble and two text boxes below it.

WELCOME,
LEONIDAS. WE
HAVE BEEN
EXPECTING
YOU.

I TRUST
YOU DIDN'T
COME EMPTY-
HANDED?

KANK


KLINK

IT LOOKS
HEAVY YOU
CARRY IT.

THE EPHORS,
PRIESTS TO
THE OLD GODS.

INBRED SWINE
WHOM EVEN A
KING MUST
BRIBE--AND
BEG.

COME
ALONG. MY
BROTHERS ARE
WAITING.



KING
HERMES
S. ON THE
MARCH
THE FATE
OF ALL
GREECE
HANGS IN
THE BAL-
ANCE.

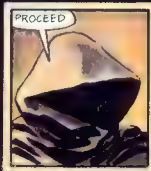
FIRST
THINGS FIRST,
LEONIDAS.

YOU
MUSN'T
INSULT
THE
GODS.

KLINK
KLANK



PROCEED



FIRST
THINGS
FIRST

THERE'S
NEVER BEEN
A HOLY MAN
WHO LACKED
THE LOVE
FOR GOLD.

THE PERSIANS
CLAIM THEIR
FORCES NUMBER
IN THE MILLIONS.
SURELY THEY EX-
AGGERATE--BUT
THERE'S NO QUES-
TION THAT WE
WILL FACE THE
MOST MASSIVE
ARMY EVER
ASSEMBLED.

WE WILL USE
OUR SUPERIOR
FIGHTING SKILL
--AND THE TERRAIN
OF GREECE HER-
SELF-- TO DESTROY
THEM. WE WILL
MARCH NORTH.
TO THE
COAST.

IT IS
AUGUST.
THE FULL MOON
APPROACHES

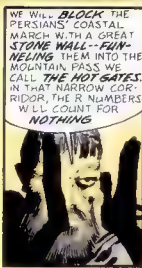
THE
CARNEIA.
THE SACRED
FESTIVAL OF THE
CARNEIA.

SPARTA
WAGES NO
WAR AT THE
TIME OF THE
CARNEIA

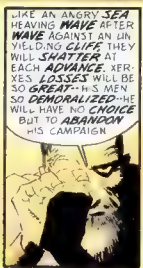




THE
FESTIVAL
WILL BE OUR
LAST--UNLESS
YOU ALLOW ME
MY PLAN--HEAR
ME OUT



WE WILL **BLOCK** THE
PERSIANS' COASTAL
MARCH WITH A GREAT
STONE WALL--FURN-
ING THEM INTO THE
MOUNTAIN PASS WE
CALL **THE HOT GATES.**
IN THAT NARROW COR-
RIDOR, THE R NUMBERS
WILL COUNT FOR
NOTHING



LIKE AN ANGRY SEA
HEAVING **WAVE** AFTER
WAVE AGAINST AN UN-
YIELDING **CLIFF** THEY
WILL **SHATTER** AT
EACH **ADVANCE.** PER-
YES **LOSSES** WILL BE
SO **GREAT--HIS MEN**
SO **DEMORALIZED--HE**
WILL HAVE NO **CHOICE**
BUT TO **ABANDON**
HIS CAMPAIGN



BUT THE
CARNEIA
...

WE MUST
CONSULT THE
ORACLE



I'D PREFER
YOU TRUSTED
YOUR
REASON

YOUR **BLASPHEMIES**
HAVE COST US QUITE
ENOUGH **ALREADY**
DON'T **COMPOUND**
THEM



WE WILL CON-
SULT THE
ORACLE.

COME
ALONG
ENJOY THE
SHOW



ABRED **SWINE** & SEARED
OLD **MYSTICS**

NORTH-LESS
REMNANTS

WORTH-LESS
USE-LESS
REMNANTS
OF THE OLD
TIME--BEFORE
LYKOURGOS
THE **LAW-**
GIVER--
BEFORE SPAR-
TAS ASCENT
FROM THE
AGE OF
DARKNESS.

REMNANTS
MOLDY-ROTTING
REMNANTS OF
ANCIENT SEASE-
LESS **STUPID**
TRADITION--TRA-
DITION EVEN
LYKOURGOS
THE **LAW-**
GIVER COULD
NOT DEFFY

LEONIDAS
MUST OBEY
THE WORD
OF THE
EPHORS.
THAT IS THE
LAW.

NO SPARTAN--
SLAVE OR CIT-
IZEN OF KING
--IS ABOVE THE
LAW

THE EARTH
COUGHS UP
ITS **VAPORS**

HE **ORACLE**
MOANS, SWIMMING
IN **TRANCE**

THE **PERON**
UNEL

THE **EPHORS** CHOOSE ONLY
THE MOST **BEAUTIFUL** OF
SPARTAN GIRLS TO LIVE
AMONG THEM AS **ORACLE**

THE OLD WRETCHED
HAVE MEN'S **NEEPS**
--AND **SOULS** AS
BLACK AS **HELL.**





PRAY TO
THE WINDS.
SPARTA WILL FALL.
ALL GREECE WILL
FALL. TRUST NOT IN
MEN, HONOR THE OLD
GODS. HONOR THE
CARNEIA.

THE CLIMB
DOWN IT'S
HARDER

POMPOUS
INDRED
SWINE.

WORTHLESS.

DISEASED.

ROTTEN

KLANK KLANK KLANK CORRUPT



GREAT
XERXES
GIVES HIS
THANKS.
WISE
MEN.

WHEN SPARTA BURNS-- YOU
WILL BATHE IN GOLD FRESH
ORACLES WILL BE DELIVERED
TO YOU-- DAILY-- FROM
EVERY CORNER OF THE
EMPIRE.



SPARTA
THE NEXT
MORNING

LEONIDAS HAS
BARELY STRAPPED
UP HIS SANDALS
WHEN THE COUNCIL
IS UPON HIM.
VOICES HUSHED:

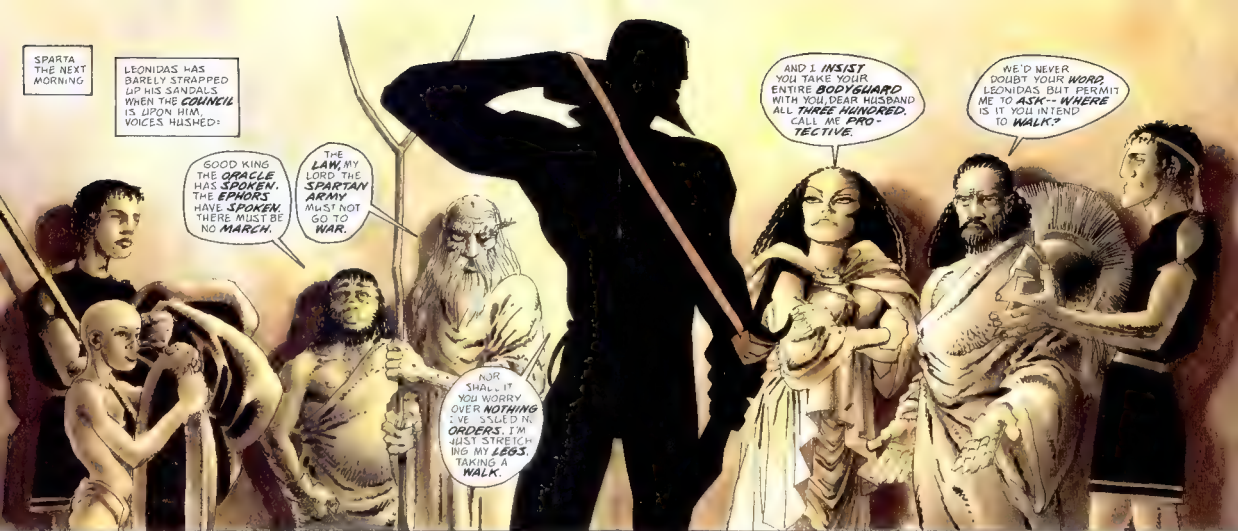
GOOD KING
THE ORACLE
HAS SPOKEN.
THE EPHORS
HAVE SPOKEN.
THERE MUST BE
NO MARCH.

THE
LAW, MY
LORD THE
SPARTAN
ARMY
MUST NOT
GO TO WAR.

NOR
SHALL IT
YOU WORRY
OVER NOTHING
I'VE ISSUED NO
ORDERS. I'M
JUST STRETCH-
ING MY LEGS.
TAKING A
WALK.

AND I INSIST
YOU TAKE YOUR
ENTIRE BODYGUARD
WITH YOU, DEAR HUSBAND
ALL THREE HUNDRED.
CALL ME PRO-
TECTIVE.

WE'D NEVER
DOUBT YOUR WORD
LEONIDAS, BUT PERMIT
ME TO ASK-- WHERE
IS IT YOU INTEND
TO WALK?



HM GOOD
QUESTION

...I HADN'T GIVEN
IT MUCH THOUGHT,
BUT NOW THAT YOU
ASK-- I SUPPOSE
I'LL HEAD NORTH

NORTH THE HOT
GATES. THIS EXPLAINS
YOUR ENTHUSIASM
LAST NIGHT

YES

SPARTA
NEEDS
SONS

SPARTAN!

YES MY
LADY?

COME BACK WITH
YOUR SHIELD-- OR
ON IT

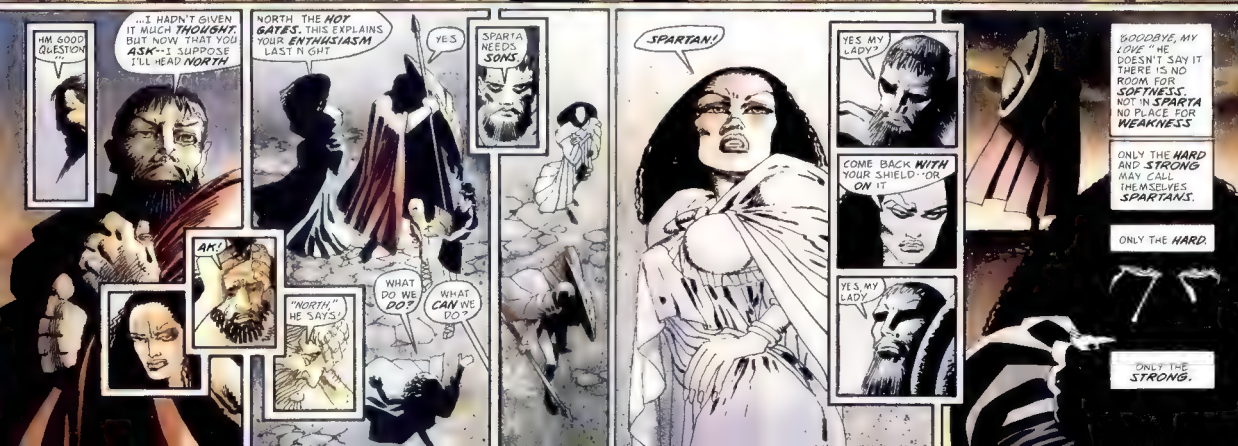
YES, MY
LADY

GOODBYE, MY
LOVE-- HE
DOESN'T SAY IT
THERE IS NO
ROOM FOR
SOFTNESS.
NOT IN SPARTA
NO PLACE FOR
WEAKNESS

ONLY THE HARD
AND STRONG
MAY CALL
THEMSELVES
SPARTANS.

ONLY THE HARD.

ONLY THE
STRONG.



A STRONG
WOMAN A
FINE WIFE
TO HIM,
ONLY A
MEMORY
NOW

HE WILL
NEVER
SEE HER
AGAIN

HE WILL NEVER
SEE SPARTA
AGAIN

FIRST
LIGHT

WE
MARCH.

NOISY
ARCADIANS
GREET US
WITH NOISY
COMPLAINTS.

DAXOS
A PLEASANT
SURPRISE

WHAT
IS THIS?

THIS MORNING'S
FULL OF SURPRISES,
LEONIDAS!

WE'VE
BEEN
TAKEN!

CAN'T
BE MORE
THAN A FEW
HUNDRED
OF THEM!

I CAN'T
BELIEVE
THIS!

WE WERE
TOLD SPARTA
WAS ON THE
WARPATH!
WE WERE
EAGER TO
JOIN
FORCES--

DAXOS! IS THIS
SOME KIND
OF JOKE?

"BUT YOU BRING
ONLY THIS HAND--
FULL-- AGAINST
XERXES?"

AS EXPECTED--
SPARTA'S
COMMITMENT
TO AT LEAST
MATCH OUR
OWN!

DOESN'T

YOU THERE
--ARCADIAN--
WHAT IS YOUR
PROFESSION?

I AM A
POTTER,
SIR

AND YOU,
ARCADIAN WHAT
IS YOUR PRO-
FESSION?

A
SCULP-
TOR,
SIR

AND
YOU?

A BLACK-
SMITH.


YOU

A
BAKER

SPARTANS!
WHAT IS YOUR
PROFESSION?

YOU
SEE, OLD
FRIEND? I
ENDURE
MORE SOL-
DIERS
THAN YOU
DO

DAXOS
SPARTANS
THEY
ALWAYS
KNOW WHAT
TO SAY



FROM **TEGEEA** AND
MANTINEA THEY
COME--FROM
THESSALIA AND
THEBES AND **OPUS**
AND **PHOCKIS** AND
MALIS. SOME BY
THE **DOZENS**.
SOME BY THE **HUN-**
DREDS. CITIZEN
SOLDIERS. FREED
SLAVES. DRAVE
GREEKS ALL.

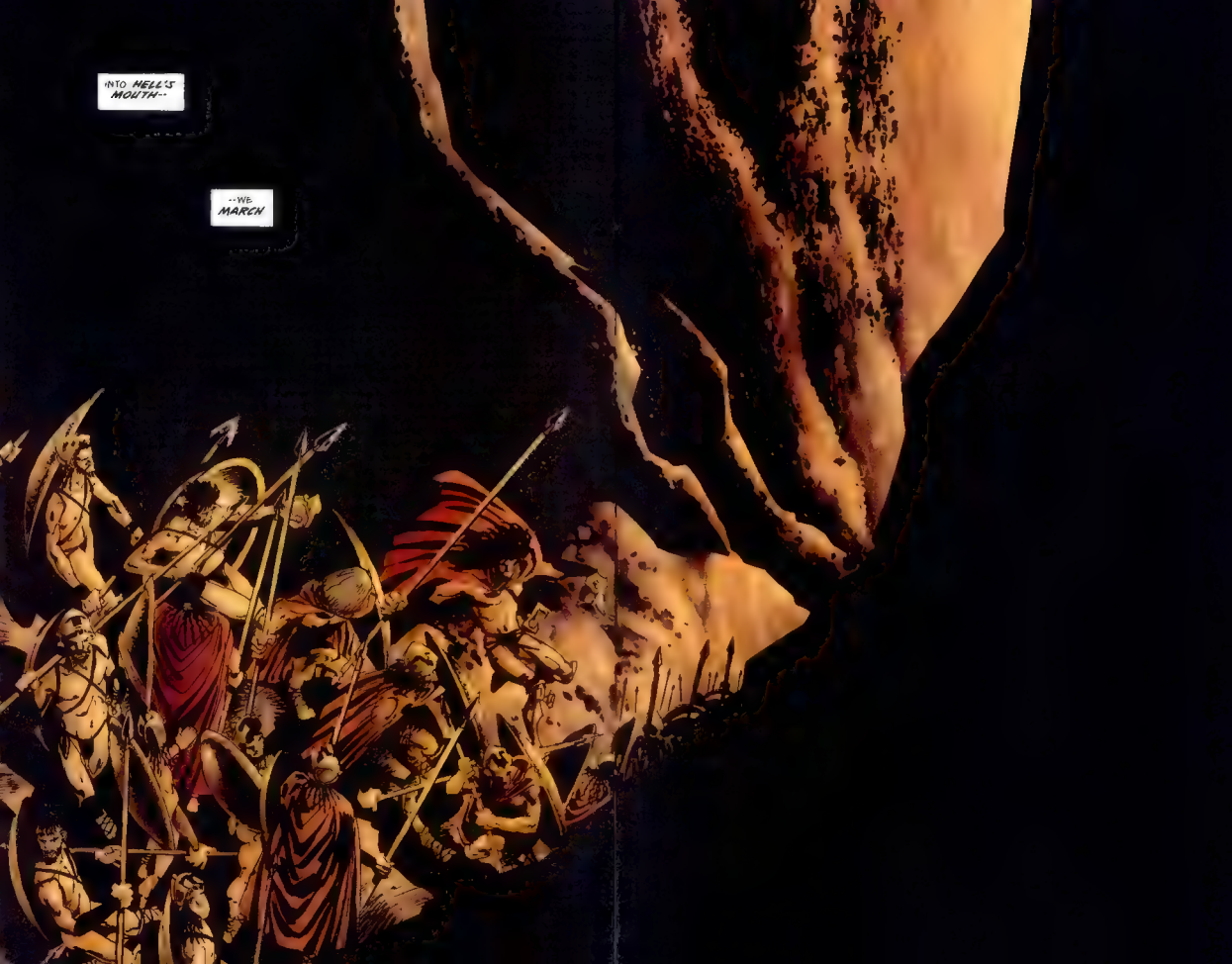
BRAVE AMATEURS.
THEY JABBER.
THEY DRAG. THEY
BICKER. THEY
JOKE. THEY EVEN
LAUGH OUT LOUD.

SEVEN
THOUSAND
STRONG--

--WE
MARCH

INTO HELL'S
MOUTH--

--WE
MARCH





THE HOT GATES

AN ANIMATED FILM BY
DAVID FENICHEL



LET THE *OTHERS* SCURRY
FOR *COVER*, WE RUSH TO
BEAR *WITNESS*.

THE GODS
PLAY.

ZEUS STABS THE
SKY WITH *THUNDER*
BOLTS.

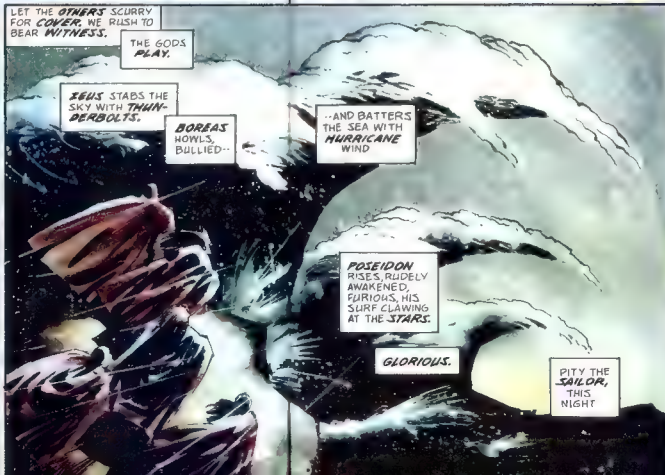
BOREAS
HOWLS,
BULLIED--

--AND BATTERS
THE SEA WITH
HURRICANE
WIND

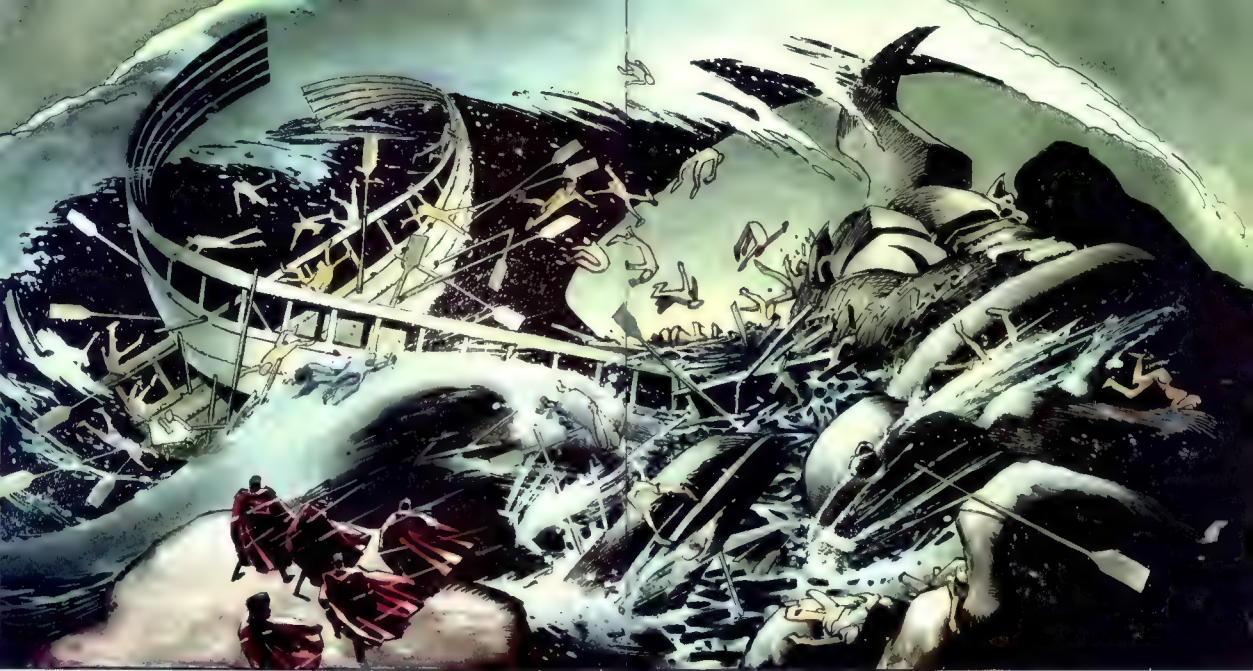
POSEIDON
RISES, RUDELY
AWAKENED,
FURIOUS, HIS
SURF CLAWING
AT THE *STARS*.

GLORIOUS.

PITY THE
SAILOR,
THIS NIGHT



LOOK
THERE!
PERSIANS!



JUBILATION.

LAUGHTER AND SONGS
AND PRAISE FOR THE GODS
THAT WILL CONTINUE TILL
THE NEXT DAY'S DAWN.

IN A ONE
AMONG US
KEEPS HIS
SPARTAN
RESERVE.

ONLY
HE

ONLY
THE
KING.

HIS THOUGHTS ARE
BITTERSWEET.

THE FOOLS THE DEAR
YOUNG FOOLS

THEY ACTUALLY THINK WE
HAVE A CHANCE

SLINGS & ARROWS



e-mail: dlanos@dhores.com

If you're lucky enough to meet with success in the comics field, other folks who'd like to show their works to your readership often ask for your public endorsement. Since we're a pretty deadline-plagued bunch, this can be a lot to ask. In fact, it can be a real pain in the butt.

I, of course, am far too self-effacing and polite a guy to even think of making that kind of imposition on my colleagues . . .

Joe Kubert
Dover, NJ

You've reached a higher level, another plateau with 300. The effort you put into research, backgrounds, and reference is apparent. The storytelling is clear, effective, and dramatic. The pacing and flow work well.

However, your most outstanding accomplishment, to me, is the immediacy of action you were able to create. Like a combat artist drawing the scenes as they occur. It allows me, the reader, to be a witness alongside you.

But it's the combination of your use of black and color where your achievement really shines. The color enhances texture and depth without overpowering. You and Lynn did good.

Adam and Andy loved it, too.

Maggie Thompson
Comics Buyer's Guide
Iola, WI

When the announcement came that a film was being made about the sinking of *Titanic*, a common reaction was a mocking rejection of the idea that the public would take to the project. "Hey, we know how it's going to end!" said many. "Who'll pay to see a movie about something so depressing?"

Who, indeed?

The point, of course, is that what's important about a work of art is how it's put together. How compelling is the creator's vision? How well does the creator know the subject? Does the creator have anything at all to say? Is the work of art involving? Does it grip the viewer and refuse to let go until the work is complete? If it's done right, audiences *will* respond — and tell their friends.

Answering the above in sequence, regarding Frank Miller's work on 300, as seen in photocopies of #1-4 (of 5 total): Very. Thoroughly. You bet. You bet. You bet.

Or, paraphrasing Goethe, "What was the creator trying to do? How well did the creator succeed? Was it worth doing?"

Answering him (but only in part; answering in full would take a bunch of pages): Tell a riveting anecdote from history so as to move a modern audience

Completely. You bet.

But it's not just one creator who's involved. Frank Miller immersed himself in research and combined his modern view with ancient motivations to grip readers with bold layouts, confident strokes, convincing scripting, and powerful storytelling. And from color photocopies provided — it's clear that Lynn Varley knows just what to do to take Miller's work to an even more dynamic level.

300 is comics storytelling at its best. This one should be kept in print permanently.

Walter Simonson
Suffern, NY

One of the things I love most about Frank's work is his ability to reinvent himself from time to time. From *Daredevil* to *Ronin* to *Dark Knight* to *Sin City*, he's traveled a long distance through four titles. And yet each of those comics represents Frank's gift for creating a uniquely realized world within the frame of his stories. It doesn't hurt that Frank is one of the best visual storytellers presently working in comics, either. And, usually, where Frank goes, a lot of others tend to follow.

Which is why I can't wait for 300 to start coming out.

The tale of the 300 Spartans is a story close to Frank's heart, one that he's wanted to tell for a long time. And I think the story of Leonidas and his boys is a hell of an adventure that deserves the nipping storytelling Frank's given it.

I must add that Lynn Varley's painting adds a wonderful dimension to Frank's work. When I initially saw some of the pages from 300, they were black-and-white faxes. And, as *Sin City* has demonstrated, Frank's work in black-and-white is so powerful that I wondered a little if the book would actually benefit from color or if the color would somehow soften or dilute the imagery. Of course, I should have had more faith in Lynn, but, hey, I'm only human! Now that I've seen the first issue in color, I can't wait to see the rest! The painting has strengthened a wonderful evocation of an ancient time and place, mixed together as it must be for modern sensibilities.

But I must confess that I think my favorite part of the whole exercise has been my anticipation of the issues actually coming out. Over the last few months, I've spoken to a few friends of mine in the retail end of comics, as well as to the occasional comics fan. And most of them had no idea who Leonidas was, who the 300 were, or what the story of Thermopylae was about. So, while there was interest, and even expectation, in Frank's new project, because it was Frank, there was only a sort of dulled comprehension that this was going to be some sort of historical comic, rather than the latest exciting intercompany crossover between

the Purple Panty Waist and Zipperman.

I think 300's going to blow the brain boxes off the shoulders of a lot of readers who won't be at all ready for what they're going to find when they open up the cover of the first issue.

I think Frank's reinvented himself again. And I think it will be awfully cool if his reinvention revitalized an entire genre that's virtually disappeared from comics!

Jeff Smith
Cartoon Books
Columbus, OH

Thanks for letting me see the first two installments of 300. They're fantastic! A little Frank Miller, a little Lynn Varley, and 300 violent, desperate men, armed only with steel and bone against impossible odds — what more could you ask for?

This is why I read comics! Pacing, tight plot, a sense of purpose, and the perfect release of information to the reader . . . something rare in any medium. And it's obvious you did your research. Everything from the sandals and hairstyles to the intrigue of the local politics makes it all credible. But the shot that really put me into the story was an overhead view of the soldiers marching through the rough, wild grass. It is clear that you have walked the stone- and grass-covered hills of Sparta yourself and seen what the soldiers would have seen.

On top of all this, you're doing all double-page spreads?! You go, boy. Use your canvas!

As I said, this is why I read comics. And these days, there are precious few reasons why anyone should. You, Frank, are one of the reasons I still do

Jill Thompson
Chicago, IL

Thank you for sending me the advance copies of Frank Miller's forthcoming project, 300! It was more than wonderful.

I thoroughly enjoyed being transported to the moments that may have led up to the Greco-Persian War. I've always enjoyed fiction based on historical events, whether it be in book or film, and I'm glad to see it in my favorite medium. It's heartening to see someone craft a tale in comics with such an unexpected subject matter (I can't wait until Eric Shanower finishes his tale of the Trojan War, either!) Comics should be used to tell all manner of stories! Projects like these remind us what a limitless medium we work in! We just have to make use of it!

The stark and graphic storytelling expertly conveys the powerful emotions of the ancient drama — but what else would you expect from Frank Miller? When he tackles a subject, it tackles you back! I'm anxiously awaiting the rest of the story so I can read it without interruption!

If this is the beginning of a new series of historical dramas from Frank Miller, I'll be along for the ride on the timeline!

Dave Gibbons
St Albans, England

We all know Frank has a way with a story, but usually a crime or fantasy one. So to find him applying his skills to ancient history comes completely from left field.

What I find amazing is how it all seems so fresh: authentic in every respect as far as I can tell, but with all the immediacy and rawness of a modern war story. The unexpected turns and juxtapositions that characterize Frank's work are all here, as well as the black

humor and the bloodshed that he deploys so well. I can't imagine anyone who was enthralled by *Dark Knight* or *Sin City* being disappointed.

And we all know Frank has a way with drawing, but, as he seems to do with each succeeding piece, he's evolved into new areas yet again with 300. The stark chiaroscuro of *Sin City* has merged with the sensitive line of *Ronin* to produce an effect which is both graphically stunning and entirely appropriate to the subject matter.

The historical detail and setting are completely convincing, and seldom have I seen research so well assimilated and interpreted. As with the story, Frank seems completely in control of his material.

At this writing, I've seen very little of Lynn's coloring, but that little leaves me no doubt that her contribution will be as stunning as her finishes on *Dark Knight*; the sense of place and atmosphere here jumps from the pages.

I can't conclude without mentioning that the combination of Frank's bold drawing and Lynn's evocative palette puts me in mind of the work of the late Frank Bellamy, whose full-color work inspired many a budding English comics artist, me included. Curiously enough, he once worked on a character called "Heros The Spartan" who, confusingly enough, was a Roman soldier based in pre-Christian Britain.

I know that Frank Miller is as likely to have plagiarized Frank Bellamy's first name as he is his work, and he'll know that I only mean it as the highest compliment to say 300 gives me the same kind of thrill that the other Frank's did, way back when.

Mimi Carroll
Night Flight
Salt Lake City, UT

As you know, I've never been much of a kiss-ass, so I'm sure you'll forgive me if my praise is a little unpolished. Regarding 300, Salt Lake City has responded with great enthusiasm. To my knowledge, as I write this at least two university professors and one high school teacher eagerly await the release of 300, and with the same eager elation plan on subjecting their students to it. Did you ever think your work might be "mandatory" reading for the overworked student? Next time you're in Salt Lake, expect an invitation to lecture, too.

With the 300 project, you've proven you can deliver the violence, inhumanity, and crime of centuries ago to today's young minds. It brings a smile to my face just thinking about it. Our regular Night Flight crowd greedily awaits 300 as well, so don't think you've just reached academic minds with this, either. At times, as I looked at the men march, I wanted to burst into *Monty Python's* "Lumberjack" song. These truly were manly men doing manly things. I guess I'm having too much fun, but I would be disappointed if your work were not fun.

All we usually hear about this period in time is the Spartans' attempt to conquer Troy, as outlined in Homer's *Iliad*. It's nice to have another story without a Trojan Horse or that Helen chick.

Varley's colors bring both a vibrancy and texture to this historical time period. Her colors are a complement to your style.

Thanks for the fun, Frank!

Bob Schreck
Oni Press
Portland, OR

What a joy it is to be alive and so privileged as to be allowed to enjoy your latest effort, months

before its release on the racks. Speaking as your former marketing director, editor, and your current occasional other publisher, I have never been more impressed with your masterful grasp of the medium. This work is by far the most dangerous, take-no-prisoners, full-throttle stick of dynamite I've ever had the pleasure of reading. As your fan, I couldn't have asked for a better series to sink my teeth into. Thank you

What's really annoying about this is that you continue to make it look easier every time you set sail. From the script and visual pacing to the brush strokes and incredible, thoughtful colors, 300 is an exquisite ballet of masterful storytelling. If you can carry on the march, I know that I, and hordes of others, will fall into rank and follow you two wherever your four feet take us

I guess what I'm trying to say is. "You two totally rip!"

Mike Mignola
Portland, OR

Naked guys with big spears and big red capes. They aren't superheroes really. They aren't jumping over buildings or smashing planets or shooting beams out of their heads. So far, at least, they're just marching, but there is more drama and power in those guys just walking around than in any number of today's "superhero" comics. I know there are a lot of different influences at work here, but behind them all is Kirby, naked as a Spartan, chompin' on a cigar, turning a big iron crank. That's a good thing!

... and if there's anything worse than begging fellow professionals to write nice things about your work, that would have to be running nakedly *quid pro quo* recommendations for theirs...

FM

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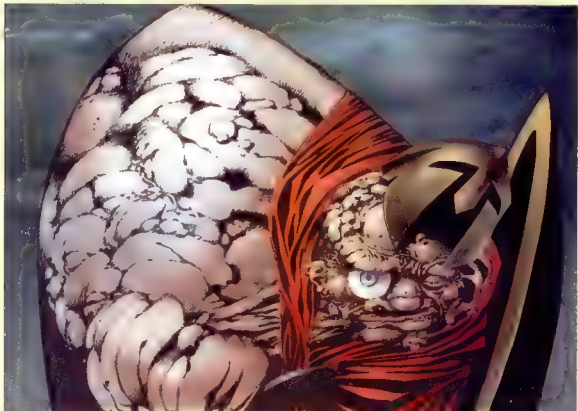
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Next issue:

GLORY



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& CYNTHIA JOHNSON**

PUBLICATION DESIGN
MARK COX

EDITOR
DIANA SCHUTZ

CHAPTER THREE:
GLORY





HEHE
HEHE

HONORED
FATHER--SMILE
DOWN UPON ME FROM
YOUR PLACE OF REST.
THIS DAY, YOUR SON
WILL PROVE HIM-
SELF. I WILL SHOW
YOU THAT YOU WERE
NOT WRONG TO
PROTECT ME

I WILL
SHOW YOU
THAT I AM
WORTHY.



HUHH?

HEHE

ASTARDS

TOK
TOK
TOK
TOK
TOK
TOK
TOK
TOK



TOK TOK
TOK

FASTER!

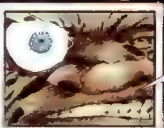
AAR

KOAK!

TOK
TOK



PERSEUS
ASTARDS.
WE'LL KILL
YOU ALL



WE
SPARTANS
WILL DESTROY
YOU



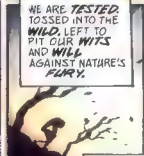
WE ARE
BORN.
WE ARE
INSPIC-
TED.



IF WE ARE
SMALL
OR PUNY
OR SICKLY
OR MIS-
SHAPEN,
WE ARE
DIS-
CARDED.



WE ARE STARVED.
DRIVEN TO
STEAL AND
FIGHT AND KILL.



WE ARE TESTED.
TOSSED INTO THE
WILD, LEFT TO
FIGHT OUR WITS
AND WILL
AGAINST NATURE'S
FURY.



BY ROD AND
LASH, WE ARE
PUNISHED.
TRAINED TO
SHOW NO
PAIN.

OUR TRAINING
NEVER ENDS

WE ARE
SPARTANS.



DOES
THIS HURT,
SPARTAN?

NO,
SIR.

ARE YOU
GETTING
TIRED,
SPARTAN?

NO,
SIR.

DO YOU
WANT TO
STOP NOW,
SPARTAN?

NO,
SIR.

DAXOS
YOU'RE UP
EARLY FOR AN
ARCADIAN.

ARE YOU
LOVING THIS,
SPARTAN?

I'M
LOVING
IT, SIR!

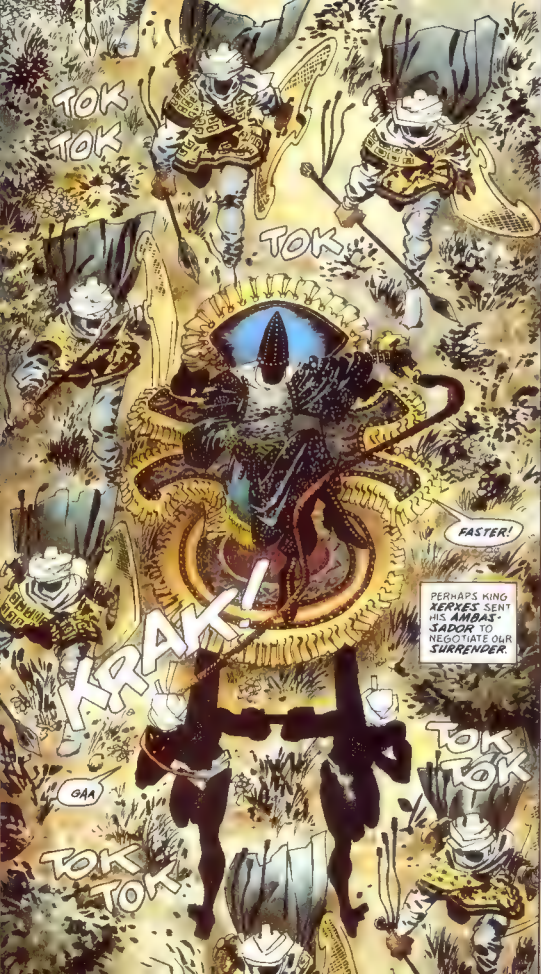
IS THERE
ANYTHING
YOU'D RATHER
BE DOING
RIGHT NOW,
SPARTAN?

NOTHING,
SIR!

A PERSIAN
AMBASSADOR
APPROACHES.
DO YOU WISH
TO GREET
HIM?

MY BOYS WILL MEET
HIM AT THE WALL.
THEY'LL SHOW HIM A
PROPER SPARTAN
WELCOME.







A SPARTAN
WELCOME



FORWARD!



IT'S TRUE
WHAT THEY
SAY

THESE
SPARTANS ARE
DEMONS



KRAK

FORWARD!

GAA



THEIR STEP
SLOWER--

--THEIR BREATH
QUICKER--

--THEIR FINGERS
GRIPPED MORE
TIGHTLY ABOUT
THEIR SPEARS--

THE SLAVES
OF XERXES
ADVANCE.



THEY WILL
ACCEPT ME! THEY
MUST ACCEPT
ME!

FATHER! BELIEVE
MOTHER! YOU WILL
SEE THAT YOU WERE
RIGHT!



KRAK



THE HOT
GATES.

THE AEGEAN
BREEZE STILL
CARRIES LAST
NIGHT'S CHILL--

--HARDLY
HINTING AT
THE AUGUST
HEAT THIS
DAY WILL
BRING.

THE SEA IS
CALM. THE
WATER
BRACING,
COLD AS
ICE.

OLYOS
SPINS HIS
STORIES

THE REPUBLICS
WERE ASSEMBLED THE
KINGS WERE SET TO
RIGHT THE SUN BURIED
DOWN UPON THE OLYMP
PIAD. DRIFTAL. TEMPLES
WERE SHORT. SURLY
SPEECHES EXCHANGED
SURLY PORRICE AND
SLEAVE HAD ENTERED
THE ARENA

HIS STORY
ABOUT THE
OLYMPICS.

NOT HIS
BEST

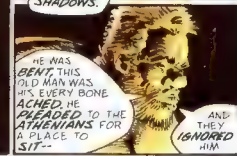


SPARTANS!
LISTEN--AND
LEARN!

THAT
PATRY DOZEN
YOU SLEW--THEY
ARE NOTHING
TO GREAT KER-
KES. THESE
HILL'S SWARM
WITH OUR
SCOUTS



THEY
MOVE LIKE
SHADOWS.



HE WAS
BENT, THIS
OLD MAN WAS
HIS EVERY BONE
ACHED. HE
PLEADED TO THE
ATHENIANS FOR
A PLACE TO
SIT--

AND
THEY
IGNORDED
HIM



AND YOUR PATHETIC
WALL--IT WILL
FALL LIKE A HEAP
OF DRY
LEAVES



...



LEANING
HEAVY ON
HIS WALKING
STICK...



OUR PHOENIX
ALLIES BUILT
THE WALL.

WE SPARTANS
SUPPLIED THE
MORTAR.

...DIZZY NOW, HIS KNEES
QUAKING, THE OLD MAN BEGGED
THE DELEGATES OF CORINTH--
OF MYKONOS--OF NAXOS--
OF THIRA.

EACH
TURNED A DEAF
EAR TO HIS
PLEA.

I SPEAK FOR
GREAT HERKES
THE GOD-KING
OFFERS YOU
ONE LAST
CHANCE--BE-
FORE ANNIHI-
LATION.

TURN
AND LISTEN,
SPARTAN
FOOL. YOU TEST
MY PATIENCE.

AT LAST, THE OLD MAN
STAGGERED TO THE
SPARTAN DELEGATION--
AND BEFORE HE COULD
CROAK OUT A SINGLE
WORD--

--EVERY
SPARTAN
ROSE--L-
ONE--AND
STEPPED
ASIDE.

DAMN
YOU! YOU
WILL LIVE
TEN!





AND THE OLD
MAN SHOOK HIS
WALKING STICK
AT ALL ASSEMBLED.
HIS VOICE RISING TO A
LION'S ROAR
THAT RATTLED THE
VERY STONES!

"EVERY
GREEK KNOWS
WHAT IS RIGHT,"
HE BELLOWED.



"EVERY
GREEK KNOWS
- BUT ONLY THE
SPARTANS
CHOOSE TO
DO IT!"



NO FALSE
MOVES, PER-
SIAN

MY
AAH!
...

IT'S NOT YOURS
ANYMORE. NEITHER
IS THE WHIR

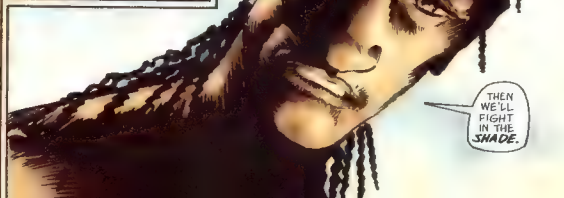
RUN BACK
TO YOUR MASTER.
TELL HIM HE
FACES FREE
MEN--NOT
SLAVES.



NOT SLAVES. NO. YOUR
WOMEN WILL BE SLAVES.
YOUR SONS AND DAUGHTERS
AND BROTHERS AND EL-
DERS WILL BE SLAVE'S BLD-
NOT YOU. BY THIS NOON
YOU WILL BE DEAD
MEN!

ONE
HUNDRED
NATIONS
DESCEND UPON
YOU!

OUR
ARROWS
WILL BLOT
OUT THE
SUN!



THEN
WE'LL
FIGHT
IN THE
SHADE.



BE **HAWY**
THESE CONARDS
USE **ARROWS**--
AND THEY USE
THEM **WELL**.

LET THEIR ARROWS
FLY STAY OUT OF **SIGHT**
UNTIL THEIR **CHARGE**. WHEN
THEY CLEAR THE LAST OF
THE **OLIVE TREES**--AND
NOT ONE HEARTBEAT **BE-
FORE**--HIT THEM
WITH EVERYTHING
YOU'VE GOT.

HATER,
GODS!
FATHER!

OOO!

PICK UP
THE **PERSIAN**

DECENT
WORK,
KATO

MAYBE
NOW YOU'LL
STOP CALLING
ME "STUBBY
BOOTS"

HELL
NO!

WE'LL BRING
YOU FRESH
SPEARS BY THE
THOUSANDS.
PERSIAN
SPEARS PLUCKED
FROM **PERSIAN**
DEAD.

WHAT WE'VE
GOT IS **LIMITED**.
KING LEONIDAS. THERE
ARE ONLY A FEW
DOZEN OF US.

WE'LL BE OUT
OF **JAVELINS**
AFTER THEIR FIRST
CHARGE.



CAPTAIN--
HAVE THE MEN
FIND ANY ROUTE
THROUGH THE
HILLS TO OUR
BACKS.

NONE,
SIR.

THERE
IS SUCH A
ROUTE, GODS!
KING

JUST
PAST THAT
WESTERN
RIDGE. IT'S A
OLD **GOAT**
PATH. THE
PERSIANS
COULD USE IT
TO **OUT-
FLANK** US.

WISE
KING--I
HUMBLY
REQUEST
AN **AUDI-
ENCE**.

NOT ONE
STEP **CLOSER**,
MONSTER.

OH
I'LL
SKEWER
YOU WHERE
YOU
STAND!

I
GAVE
NO SUCH
ORDER.
CAPTAIN,
BACK
OFF.

FORGIVE THE
CAPTAIN. HE'S A
GOOD **SOLDIER**--
BUT A BIT SHORT
ON **MANNERS**.

THERE IS
NOTHING TO FOR-
GIVE, BRAVE KING.
I KNOW WHAT I
LOOK LIKE.

I AM **EPHIALTES**,
BORN OF **SPARTA**.
MY MOTHER'S **LOVE**--
ED MY PARENTS TO
FLEE SPARTA, LEST I
BE **DISCARDED**. MY
FATHER BECAME A
SHEPHERD--BUT
HE TAUGHT ME THE
WARRIOR'S WAY.

I **BEG** YOU, BUILD
KING. TO PERMIT ME
TO **REDEEM** MY
FATHER'S **NAME** BY
SERVING YOU--IN
COMBAT.

LET'S
TAKE A
WALK

DAY AN
NIGHT MY FATHER
TRAINED ME--TO FEEL
NO PAIN--TO SHOW NO
PAIN--TO TRAIN MY
SWORD AND
SHIELD AS MUCH A
PART OF ME AS MY
OWN BEATING
HEART

BOY

HUNEE!

YOU SEE?
MY ARMS ARE
STRONG MY
REACH IS LONG
I WILL EARN MY
FATHER'S ARMOR,
HUNEE PAIN-- AND
RECLAIM MY
FAMILY'S
HONOR.

I WILL
KILL MANY
PERISTANS!

A FINE
THIRST
BUT

RAISE
YOUR SHIELD
AS FAR UP AS
YOU CAN.



YOUR FATHER SHOULD'VE
TAUGHT YOU HOW OUR
PHALANX WORKS. WE
FIGHT AS A SINGLE,
IMPENETRABLE UNIT.
THAT'S THE SOURCE
OF OUR STRENGTH.



EACH SPARTAN PRO
TECTS THE MAN TO HIS
LEFT FROM THIGH
TO NECK. WITH HIS
SHIELD, A SINGLE
WEAK SPOT-- AND
THE PHALANX SHAT
TERS. FROM THIGH
TO NECK, REPEATES





DISPATCH
THE PHOEGIANS
TO THAT GOAT
PATH--AND PRAY
TO THE GODS THAT
NOBODY TELLS
THE PERSTIANS
ABOUT IT

WHIFF!

EARTH
QUAKE!

NO, CAPTAIN, THAT'S
NO EARTHQUAKE!

BATTLE
STATIONS!



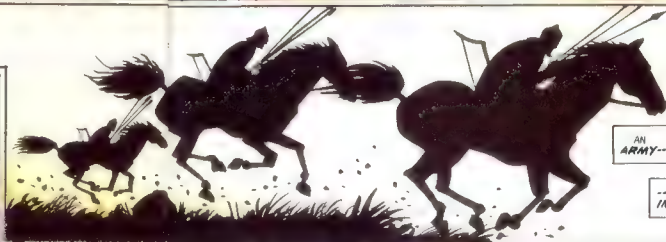
A BEAST
APPROACHES--

--SAVORING
THE MEAL TO
COME



A FORCE
OF MEN--

--SO MASSIVE
IT SHADES THE
EARTH WITH
ITS MARCH.



AN
ARMY--

--VAST BEYOND
IMAGINING--



--POISED TO DEVOUR
TINY GREECE--

--TO SNIFF
OUT THE
WORLD'S ONE
HOPE FOR
REASON AND
JUSTICE.







COME
AND GET
IT.

SLINGS & ARROWS

e-mail: dianas@dhorse.com

Mark J. Kiewlak
Nanticoke, PA

No matter how many times you prove me wrong, I will still have a tendency to look at your work and, upon first glance, call it "thin" in terms of words on the page and the amount of "story" told.

Then I read those words — not one of them wasted nor used unnecessarily, more often than not used instead for the maximum possible effect, such as the simple and stirring poetry of the repeated "We march" in the opening.

Then I consider the amount of "story" — how we are introduced to an army which functions as one — and how we see the consequences for young "Stumblies" and for his captain when they disturb that perfect order — how we see the heart of the man who leads them, a heart forged in battle at such a young age against a merciless opponent. And, in a final bit of symmetry, we see a new opponent, no different than the old one, rise up — and Leonidas treat him just as he had the earlier one, turning his back on him in the final panel and preparing for the inevitable attack.

I wonder if Leonidas doesn't welcome this new challenge after so long — if perhaps he wished to prove himself in his old age as he did in his youth, to show himself worthy of the God-like worship he commands. I wonder if that isn't why he sought the least diplomatic solution and, knowing full well the consequences, treated the messenger from Persia with such brutality and disdain.

I wonder about a whole lot of things in this new-very-old story. But not you, Mr. Miller. Nor about the worthwhileness of this latest story-telling endeavor. You keep on doing what you're doing . . . and we'll all be better off for it.

Dan H. Eiler
Newton Falls, OH

Although I think of you as the king of chiaroscuro, I'm happy to see you back doing artwork for a color project (and please tell Lynn Varley she's been greatly missed). Of course, this sample marks just the beginning of your project, so it's difficult to tell exactly what you're aiming to accomplish and impossible to tell whether these first, creative steps are the right ones, but your start is auspicious. Your pacing is dynamic and draws the reader in. I don't know

how much of a "team book" this will turn out to be, but the Spartan soldiers in the first few pages are individuated enough for you to go that way. Your presentation of Sparta's king, Leonidas, paints the portrait of a leader in bold but revealing strokes. My knowledge of ancient Greek history is spotty at best, but I can remember that Sparta was Greece's most militant city-state because of its huge slave population; the Spartans had to be prepared to put down any home-grown insurrections. I hope you'll go into that aspect of their culture later in the series.

I like that you're finding the right balance between pictures and captions in your work. In *Ronin*, and even in some of your *Sin City* features, your prose has been sparse. And full frontal male nudity? Gee, I can remember the first time I saw female cleavage in a comic book, in an old Joe Kubert *Sgt. Rock* story. Have you chosen ancient Greece for your story, I wonder, because the classical setting will make it easier for you to shatter yet another comics taboo?

I was delighted by the look ahead at this, your newest project. I will follow it faithfully to its conclusion and will buy any sequels. (That is, until Leonidas teams up with Spider-Man. Then I'm outta here!)

You and me both. Leonidas only picked fights with enemies who stood some kind of chance against him.

Keith Haney
Athens, TN

This series will probably rank up there with the best work of your career. I have been a history fanatic since grade school, and while my knowledge of ancient Greece is mostly general and scanty, I have long known about that famous stand-off at Thermopylae. My first exposure to it was an old movie, the title of which I have never known, retelling it in the usual, grand, distorted Hollywood fashion so common to the movies. I later learned about the general historic details of the battle in my sophomore year in high school. Then, I saw one brief little aside on the first page of the last part of your own *Big Fat Kill*. But I would never have even guessed that you would make it into a full-fledged miniseries. But having read through the preview twice, I'm glad that you did.

I would like to present my sincere compliments to Lynn Varley. If Ms. Schutz's claim that the Xerox provided [as the preview] do not do Ms. Varley's fine work justice, than I am expecting some great things with the finished copy. In an era of computer art and separations, Ms. Varley is a standout on the basis of her reliance on the old-fashioned method of coloring alone. But, from the first scenes of the Spartan army marching at dawn, her colors prove to be, as always, the perfect complement to your art. Of your art, I will say no more than that it is your usual high standard of such aesthetic and story-telling matters. Any other compliments on this point would simply be superfluous on my part. Of the one thing that I buy any comic for — the story — I can sum up in three little words: *I love it!* I'm sure a few folks are going to be shocked over the severe sets of punishments for doing anything that disrupts the dignity and discipline of the Spartan army, but I can't say I was one of them. Sparta, after all, was an absolute despotism (which is really the natural state of most of the world's governments), where obedience is an understood way of life. Any deviation from this in such places is not tolerated.

The story of King Leonidas' initiation was a nice touch, as was the king's reaction to it: "Children. Such noise. Get your sleep." I guess after you hear the same story a hundred times, you get bored in a hurry. But the really funny part was the flashback to the arrival of the Persian messenger. If I had lived in that time and place, met this guy, and heard why he was riding to Sparta, I'd have laughed in his face. Sparta, the military boot camp of the Peloponnesian peninsula, submitting to the authority of some pompous jackass in distant Persia? What Xerxes was trying to do by sending this mission (other than get rid of a few incompetent soldiers in his army) is beyond me. The pride of King Leonidas was, at least, the equal of the Persian prince, and such men do not give an inch on such matters. But the most poignant part of this segment was the quiet reflections of Leonidas himself, thinking of the men that he is about to send to their graves and the new beast he must face. Despite the fact that he thought he had provoked the Persians, he had so much of his city's character that he literally could not do anything else and call himself a man. It was either submit to the Persians without a fight or take them on and damn the odds. As Leonidas pointed out to the messenger, they did have a reputation to maintain.

The movie, called *The 300 Spartans*, was released in 1962. I saw it when I was five — and have been entranced with the Hot Gates ever since. While it's kind of a clunky old show, it's surprisingly accurate — and it sure inspired *this* kid.

Tony Daley
Chicago, IL

Historical fiction demands a special respon-

sibility from the creator, who must use the full resources of his sentiment, knowledge, and skills to establish drama while holding, as much as possible, to the truth of events

Yet truth is usually malleable, depending on the quality of research and investigation. Therefore, if Mel Gibson makes errors about the life of Sir William Wallace in *Braveheart*, we will forgive if the narrative is adept. If *Lew Wallace* fudged on details of ancient Rome, do we care, if we are sufficiently engaged by the exploits of Ben-Hur? Similarly, historical novelists from Mary Renault to Gary Jennings can be absolved of blame if occasionally there is an anachronism or a gaffe in historicity.

Thus, what you are doing while leading up to Thermopylae — to the mythology of those days of heroic resistance — matters more in terms of dramatic elements than verisimilitude.

With 300, you have marshaled the best of your skills while muting the lesser. The lesser are, of course, certain particulars of writing and of visual presentation. However, if the figures sometimes seem more stiff than those in Jack Katz's *First Kingdom*, or the language suffers from mannerism or structural inelegance, we forgive in light of your ability to paint in broad, cinematic strokes the processes and degrees of events and actions.

You've particularly mastered the technique of panel placement, moving smaller boxes within larger, panoramic rectangles; using static pictures better than ever in making a convincing show of camera movement. Especially effective were the foreshortened layouts from high angles; I'm not sure if you were using high shots for thematic or purely formal purposes, but they worked. And, of course, the anatomy has come a long way from even *The Dark Knight Returns*. You're approaching the level of prime Ditko — the Ditko of the Warren stories back in the sixties, especially. Like Ditko, you apparently learned in the trench warfare of comics, not the classrooms of art schools. You developed certain abilities, while replicating mistakes and misconceptions. Ditko admitted to his own shortcomings as an artist, but Ditko was, like Kirby, a supreme comic-book artist. What one would find ghastly in Delacroix, one would accept within the vocabulary of graphic stories.

Historical fiction is like algebra, where the unknown factors remain unknown. There's no way to sum up to a whole, perfect, rational number. If there is a sum, it is irrational — a series of fractions dancing into infinity, the fractions of splintered historical perspective. Happily, you've tackled something different from your hard-boiled *Sin* material. You've gone beyond post-modern, mean-streets hucksterism. Your thoughts are richer these days, from the evidence of 300. You've colored the time of Leonidas and Xerxes with the patois and response and attitude of a sharp ex-New Yorker, while painting in the rich colors of spectacle. You've put skin and muscle and bone behind the battered shields and greaves of your warriors. There is not much

depth here — but there is enough pageantry, like the best of DeMille

In short, another example of Millerian resistance against the Persian hordes of comicdom's mediocrity.

Matt Halsey
Edison, NJ

It isn't too often that one finds historical comics, let alone comics about events that took place 2500 years ago. As I read *300* #1, I found myself engrossed in the story. Leonidas seems very distraught; I took it that he's probably mulling over his small force's prospect against the massive army. He seems to be looking back with regret at the end of the issue, focusing on the day he received the Persian messenger and declined the Persians' offer

Issue #2 continues the story effectively. We learn about Leonidas, how the Persians bribed the Ephors to give Leonidas false advice, knowing that Greeks were bound to follow the priests' words as law.

The color preview of issue #2 was far more beautiful than issue #1; not that Frank's line art is bad, but Varley's colors add entire dimensions to the story. It's so great to see them working together. *300* is truly the type of project that is deserving of their collaboration.

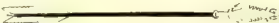
Chris Adams
Meriden, CT

Ancient Greece, huh? Hardly the first place

that springs to mind as a setting for a comic-book story. But it's a wonderful place to tell a good story. You certainly appear to be doing that. A small group of soldiers marching off into the face of certain doom to defend their homeland against a mammoth invasion force — how could you not want to read more? Especially when it looks like this. The art was stellar, as usual. The two-page splash format seems to add to the grandeur of the story. I look forward to some epic battle scenes. The black-and-white of the preview issue didn't detract in the slightest. You're one of the few artists whom I like as much, if not more, in black-and-white. I think the Spartans' grim march to war looked damn fine without color. I'll have to wait until May to see if color adds as much as I think it will.

By now you know. It does. It does.

— Frank Miller



Next issue:

COMBAT



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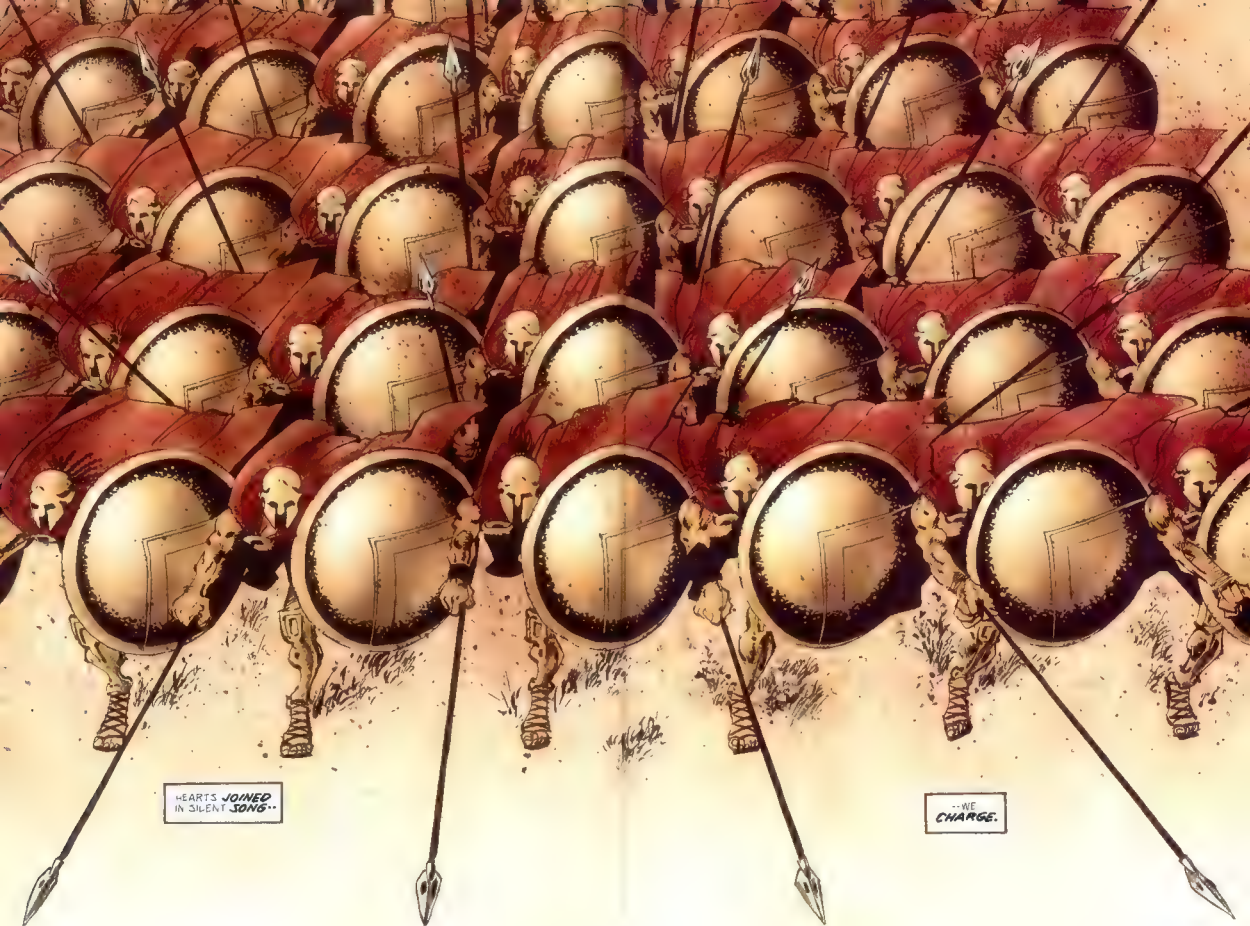
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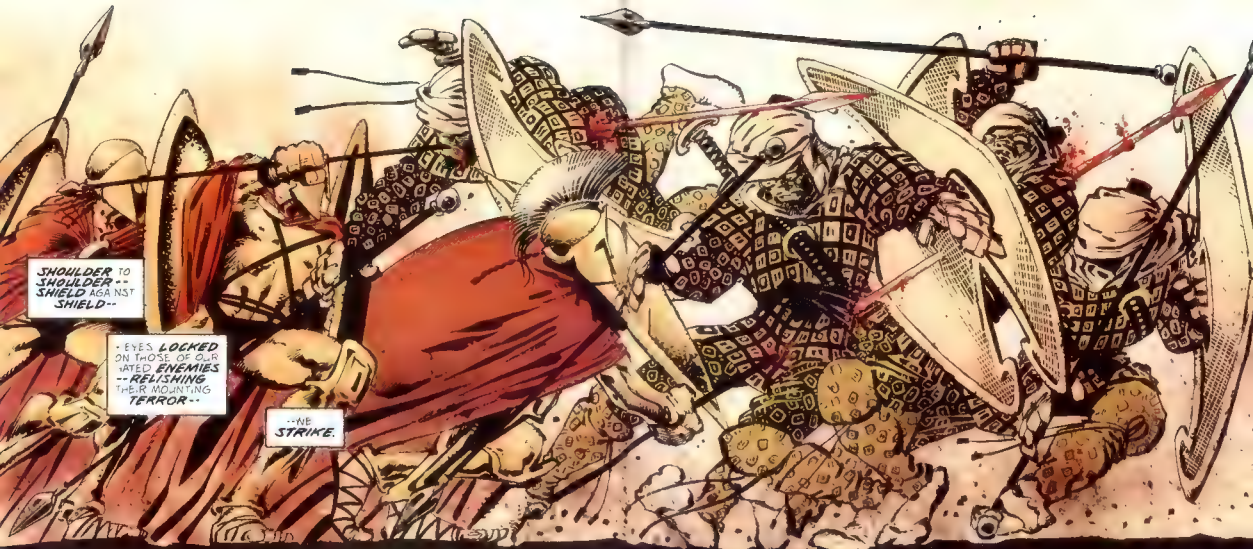
CHAPTER FOUR:
COMBAT





HEARTS JOINED
IN SILENT SONG...

...WE
CHARGE.



SHOULDER TO
SHOULDER--
SHIELD AGAINST
SHIELD--


• EYES LOCKED
ON THOSE OF OUR
HATED ENEMIES
--RELISHING
THEIR MOUNTING
TERROR--

--WE
STRIKE.



JOINED--FUSED--A
SINGLE CREATURE--
INDIVISIBLE, IMPE-
NEABLE, UN-
STOPPABLE--

--WE
PUSH.



HERS AN' GASP AND
GROAN AND GURGLE
AND SCREAM AND
STUMBLE AND TUM-
BLE AND FALL.
BRANS SPLATTERING
ACROSS BRAN'S STONE,
JUNOS SUCKING DEEP
OF THE DEADLY,
SALTY SEA.

BE SPARTANS
LAUGH LIKE
FOOLS--AND
GET PUSHING.

NO
PRISONERS.

NO
MERCY.

WE'RE OFF
ONE HELL
OF A GOOD
START.

THE
FIRST
DAY

A DISTANT
HORN
CALLS

A THOUSAND
HARPIES
SCREECH



THE SKY
GOES
DARK, A
THICKET
RISES.

COWARDS...
COME AND
GET IT.

ONE HUNDRED
NATIONS DESCEND
UPON US.

SNORTING SNARLING
DESERT BEASTS.

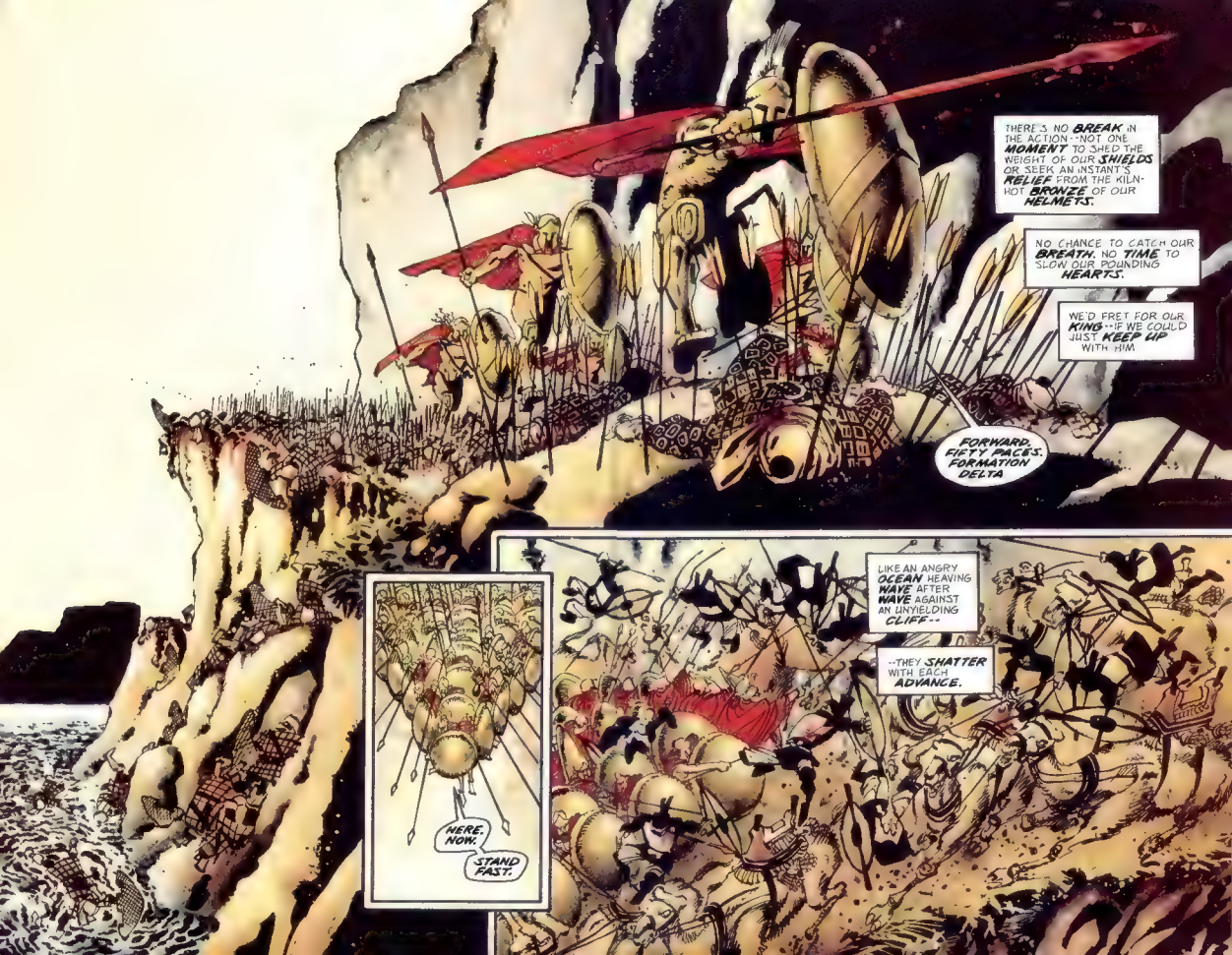
HOWLING
BARBARIANS.

THE ARMIES
OF ALL ASIA--

PLEGED TO
CRUSH THE
IMPERTINENT
REPUBLICS OF
GREECE--

--TO MAKE
SLAVES OF
THE ONLY
FREE MEN
THE WORLD
HAS EVER
KNOWN.





THERE'S NO **BREAK** IN
THE ACTION--NOT ONE
MOMENT TO SHED THE
WEIGHT OF OUR **SHIELDS**
OR SEEK AN INSTANT'S
RELIEF FROM THE KIL-
NOT **BRONZE** OF OUR
HELMETS.

NO CHANCE TO CATCH OUR
BREATH. NO **TIME**. NO **TIME** TO
SLOW OUR POUNDING
HEARTS.

WE'D FRET FOR OUR
KINGS--IF WE COULD
JUST **KEEP UP**
WITH HIM.

FORWARD.
FIFTY PACE'S.
FORMATION
DELTA

LIKE AN ANGRY
OCEAN HEAVING
WAVE AFTER
WAVE AGAINST
AN UNYIELDING
CLIFF--

--THEY **SHATTER**
WITH EACH
ADVANCE.

HERE.
NOW.
STAND
FAST.

KUNCH
KUNCH

KUNCH

KUNCH

WHAT WE
WERE **BORN**
TO DO

WHAT WE
WERE **BRED**
TO DO

WE DO
WHAT WE
WERE
TRAINED
TO DO

KUNCH

MERCY!
GIAA

COWARD!

KUNCH



NO PRISONERS

KUNCH

NO
MERCY

KUNCH

A GOOD
START

KUNCH

AFTERNOON NO
MOVEMENT FROM
THE PERSIAN
CAMP.

WE SET OUR
SHIELDS DOWN AND
PULLED OUR **HELMETS**
OFF AND SHAKE AWAY
OUR **SWEAT**. WE
BAND OUR **WOUNDS**--
AND PUT THE **FIN-**
ISHING TOUCHES
TO THE **ARMOR**'S
WORK.

NO
PRISONERS.

NO
MERCY.

GAAK

KUNCH

HURAK

KUNCH

GHA

THE
ARCADIANS
ARE GETTING
TWITCHY. SURE
THEY'RE **BEGGING**
FOR A CRACK AT
THE **PERSIANS**.

GOOD I'VE GOT A **FLANKING**
MANEUVER IN MIND FOR THEM
--AND I WANT THEM **EAGER**. TELL
DAKOS TO HAVE THEM **SOBER** AND
READY FOR THE NEXT **CHARGE**.
WHILE YOU'RE AT IT, GET THEIR
HELP PILING THE **CORPSES** ONTO
THAT **MOUND**. STACK THEM
HIGH.

LOOK NOW--
THERE'S AN
EXCITED YOUNG
FELLOW.

HEIF
HEIF

KING
LEONIDAS!

STELIOS
CATCH YOUR
BREATH,
BOY

YES, MY
LORD

MUFF
HEIF

PERSIANS
APPROACH. MY
LORD, A **SMALL**
CONTINGENT
TOO SMALL FOR
AN **ATTACK**.

MAYBE
THEY FEEL
LIKE A
CHAT.

I'M ON
MY **WAY**.
I CAPTAIN
YOU'RE IN
CHARGE

RELAX IF
THEY AS
SASSINATE
ME, ALL
SPARTA
GOES TO
WAR.

BUT,
SURE--

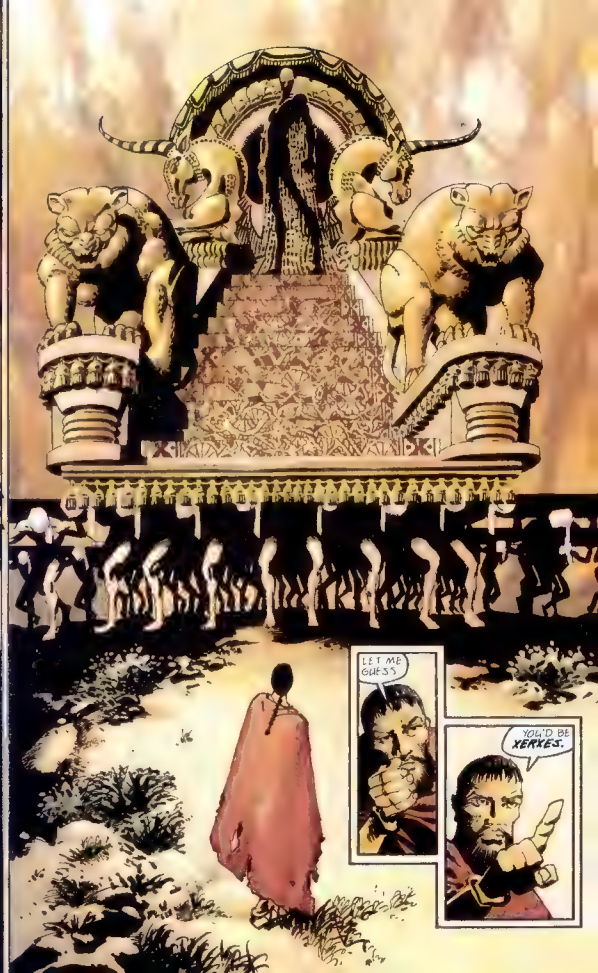
PRAY THEY'RE
THAT **STUPID**.
PRAY WE'RE
THAT **LUCKY**.

BESIDES, THERE'S
NO REASON WE CAN'T
BE **CIVIL**. IS THERE?

NONE,
SURE

KUNCH

GAA



A VOICE AS SMOOTH
AS **WARM OIL** ON
WELL-WORN **LEATHER**
- AND AS **DEEP AS**
ROLLING **THUNDER**:-

"CON DAS - IT
IS REASON
TOGETHER

"I WOULD BE
A REGRETTABLE
WASTE - IT WOULD BE
NOTHING SHORT OF
MADNESS - WERE YOU
AND YOUR VALENT TROOP
PERISH, ALL BECAUSE
OF A SINGLE **AND DAB**.
**MISUNDERSTAND-
ING**.

"DON'T LOSE
SLEEP WORRYING
OVER **US**. WE'RE
HAVING THE TIME OF
OUR **LIVES**."

BRAVE WORDS **SPAR-
TAN** WORDS, YOURS.
A FASCINATING
TRIBE THERE IS
MUCH OUR CULTURES
COULD **SHARE**.



"WE'VE
BEEN
SHARING
OUR **CUL-
TURE** WITH
YOU ALL
MORNING."

ENOUGH
SARCASM. YOU
GREEKS TAKE PRIDE
IN YOUR **LOGIC**. I SUG-
GEST YOU **EMPLOY** IT
TO CONSIDER THE BEAUTIFUL
LAND YOU SO VIGOROUSLY
DEFEND. PICTURE IT
REDUCED TO **ASH**.

"ON CONSIDER THE
FATE OF YOUR
WOMEN."

"YOU DON'T
KNOW OUR
WOMEN. I MIGHT
AS WELL HAVE
MARCHED **THEM**
HERE, JUDGING BY
WHAT I'VE SEEN.
YOU HAVE MANY **MEN**,
XERXES. BUT FEW
SOLDIERS. AND, I
WOON I BE LONG
BEFORE THE YEAR
MY **SPARTANS** MORT-
THAN YOUR
WHIPS."

IT'S NOT THE
LASH THEY FEAR.
IT IS MY **DYING**
POWER. BUT I AM
A **GENEROUS**
GOD. I CAN MAKE
YOU **RICH** BE-
YOND ALL
MEASURE.

I CAN MAKE YOU
WARLORD OF
ALL **GREECE**.
CARRYING MY **BAT-
TLE STANDARD**
TO THE HEART OF
EUROPE. YOUR
ATHENIAN **RIVALS**
WILL KNEEL AT
YOUR **FEET**. IF
YOU, BUT KNEEL
AT **MINE**.

THAT'S
QUITE AN **OFFER**.
I'D BE **GLAD** TO
REFUSE IT.

BUT THIS **KNEELING**
BUSINESS, I'M AFRAID
KILLING ALL THOSE
SLAVES OF YOURS HAS
LEFT ME WITH A NAS-
TY **CRAMP** IN
MY **LEG**.

AS I AM **GENEROUS**,
SO I AM **WIRATHFUL**.
I WILL **ERASE** EVEN
THE **MEMORY** OF
SPARTA FROM THE
HISTORYS. THERE
WILL BE NO **GLORY**
IN YOUR SACRIFICE

NO ONE
WILL EVER
KNOW.

"I THINK
I'LL WALK
TOFF."

"TO
SADDEN
ME."

"THEY'LL
KNOW"

"WATCH
YOUR **BACK**. YOUR
MEN LOOK
NERVOUS."



THE FIRST NIGHT





WORDLESS-- THEIR OWN **FAULTLESS**-- MOVING IN SUCH PERFECT **UNISON** EACH COLLECTIVE **STEP** STRIKES THE EARTH LIKE A BLOW FROM THE FIRE GOD'S **HAMMER**-- THEY **MARCH**.

THE **PERSONAL GUARD** TO KING **XERXES**, THE PERSIAN **WARRIOR ELITE**, THE DEADLIEST **FIGHTING FORCE** IN ALL **ASIA**.

THE **IMMORTALS**.

NOW, WHILE WE ARE **FRESH** AND AT OUR **FULL STRENGTH**-- BEFORE **WOUNDS** AND **WEARINESS** HAVE TAKEN THE **TOLL** THE MAD KING THROWS THE **BEST** HE HAS AT US.



HEROES HAVE **TAKEN** THE **BAT**.

AND NOW THE **TRAP** IS **SPRINGING**.



THE IMMORTALS.
WE PUT THEIR NAME
TO THE TEST.

BY S. L. PERRY
AND K.



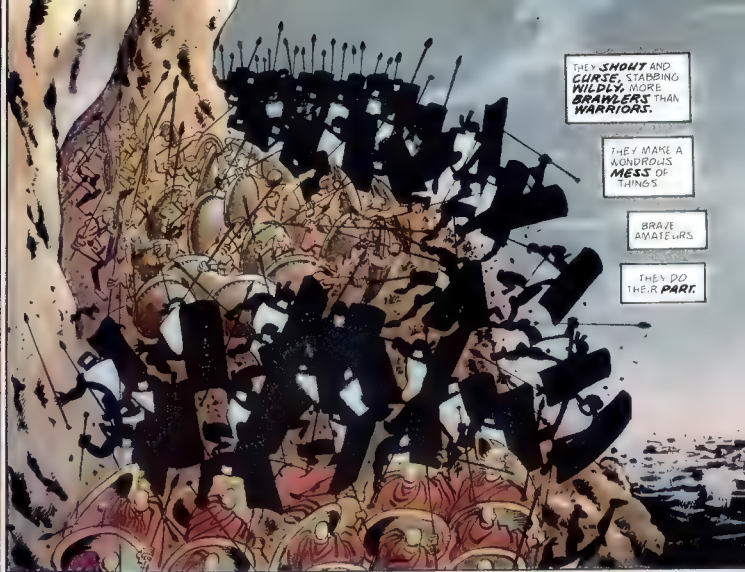
ARCADIANS...

...NOW!



GO! GO!
GO! LET'S
SHOW THE SPAR-
TANS WHAT WE
CAN DO!

CALL US
AMATEURS.
WELL,
THEY



THEY **SHOUT** AND
CURSE, STABBING
WILDLY MORE
BRAWLERS THAN
WARRIORS.

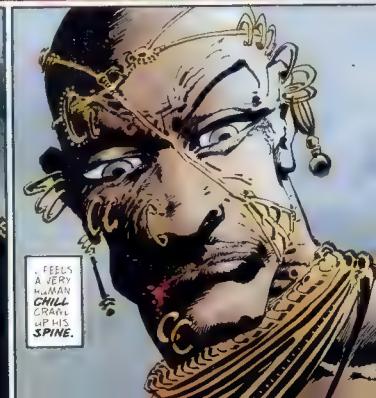
THEY MAKE A
GROSS
MESS OF
THINGS.

BRAVE
AMATEURS.

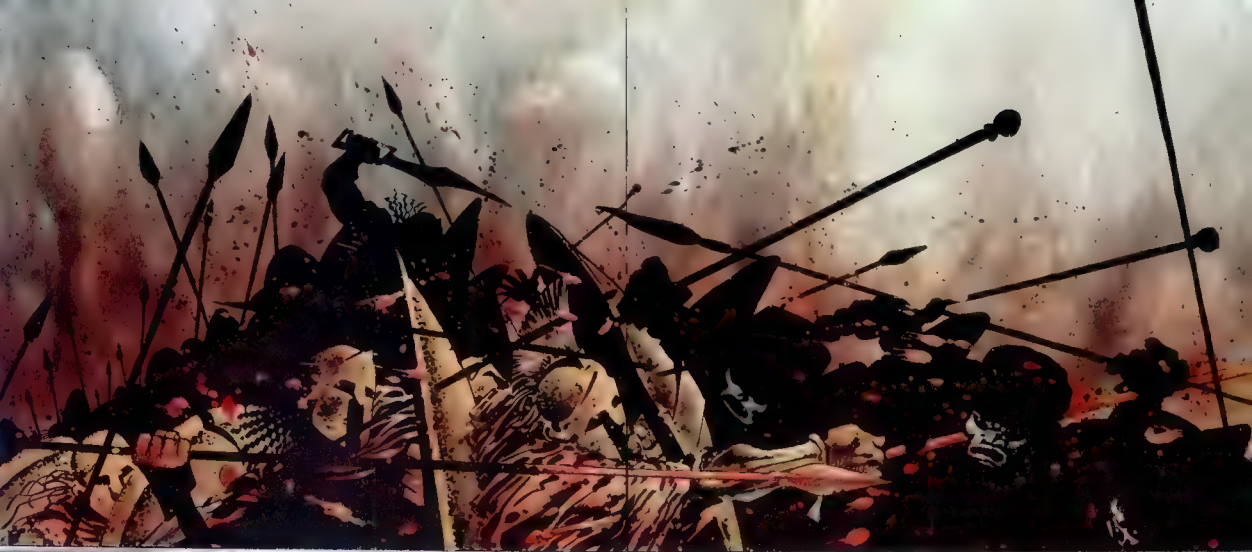
THEY DO
THEIR **PART**.



AND A MAN
WHO FANCIES
HIMSELF A
GOD...



FEELS
A VERY
HUMAN
CHILL
CRAWL
UP HIS
SPINE.





CHILDREN
WILL DROWN

TRIUMPH
THE DAY IS
OURS.

THE GOD-AD
IMMORTALS
SLINK BACK
TO THEIR
BAMP LIKE
WHIPPED
OGGS--AND
A VERY PER-
SIAN SEES
IT

WHOM WILL
XERXES
DARE TO DIS-
PATCH NEXT?

AND WHO
AMONG HIS
LEGIONS
WILL DARE TO
FACE THE
SPARTANS?



EVEN THE
KING ALLOWS
HIMSELF TO
HOPE--FOR
MORE THAN
G. DRY

SUCH MAD
HOPE--BUT
WHERE IS AS.

AGAINST ASAS
ENDLESS
HORDS--
AGAINST ALL
ODDS--WE
CAN DO IT WE
CAN HOLD
THE HOT
GATES.

WE CAN WIN

EVEN AS WE RUB
OIL INTO STIFFENED
MUSCLES AND
SEAL TORN FLESH
WITH RED HOT IRON
--EVEN AS WE BID
FAREWELL TO
OUR HUNDRED
DEAD--EACH
HOUR BRINGS
GOOD THINGS.

THE ATHENIAN
FLEET HAS ENGAGED
THE FOG AT SEA,
HACKING MERCI-
LESSLY AT
XERXES' NAVY.

AND BACK ON LAND,
AT THE PERSIAN
CAMP--BLESSED
CHAOS.



CHAOS! THE
KEDI'S AND SKYTHIANS
ARE NO OPEN PEACOCKS!
XERXES'S SLAUGHTER
ON HIS OWN TROOPS

AND THERE
NOTHING IS
AN STOP US
NOTHING

SETTLE
DOWN BE-
CAUSE I GOT
ROCKY

LIFE'S
FULL OF
MISTAKES

KHAFF
GODS--I
BREATHE
I ST--LIVE--
GODS--YOU ARE
CRUEL!

DAMN



DAMN YOU DAMN YOU
GODS! DAMN YOU FATHER!
DAMN YOU MOTHER!
DAMN YOU ALL
TO HELL!

HEARD

SPARTANS...



...SPARTANS!
THE BOLDEST OF
MEN THE FINEST
WARRIORS IN ALL
THE WORLD!

DAMN

PTUI



DAMN
YOU
ALL!

SLINGS & ARROWS



e-mail: dianos@dhorse.com

Gerry Alanguilan
San Pablo City, Philippines

There is a feeling I get when I read Frank's stories, and it is a feeling I get only from him. My pulse races, and my heart beats faster, and the pages pound with the power of the story and the images. This is a feeling I felt when I read *Born Again* and *Man Without Fear*, and, to some extent, *Sin City*. 300 gives me all that and more.

The art is laid out as all double-page spreads, and understandably so. A story of this kind can never be fully told through traditional means. The story and the characters are all so big, it seems like the comic book is too small to contain them. If it is true that this book shall eventually be compiled in an oversized format, I think that would be a great idea. It would serve this story well.

Frank's art is reminiscent of *Ronin* and *Dark Knight* with a little bit of *Sin City* thrown in. What impressed me most of all are his layouts. Frank is a genius at composing pages. He knows just how and where to put the elements to provoke the reaction he wants. The shot of the soldiers marching through a field is so beautifully composed, I felt I wanted to cut it up and frame it.

I was expecting Lynn's colors to be as vibrant and as intricate as what she did in *Elektra Lives Again*. I was disappointed to see that the coloring was a lot more simple. My disappointment vanished quickly, though "Simple," in this case, is quite deceiving. The colors are subtle and well chosen. I find myself looking at the pictures over and over. Absolutely beautiful!

As I went on reading, I simply got so lost in the story that when I flipped the page and there was no more, I felt frustrated! No! There has got to be more! One more month? I don't think I can wait that long. Frank knows just what buttons to push and when to push them. And he does it with impunity! This is a reaction I get when I read a Frank Miller book and only from a Frank Miller book.

My hat's off to you, Frank, and Lynn, too! Great job!

Patrick Marcel
manicor@cyberstation.fr

Naive me. Here I was, all set to enjoy 300. The artwork is Miller in fine form, the narration is superb, and the colors are gorgeous. Plus, there was a welcome relief from all these *Sin City* Chandler/Spillane pastiches I am so bored with.

Then I got to: "If those boy-lovers found that kind of nerve..."

Ah
One is to infer from the phrase that "boy-lovers" are considered despicable and cowardly by Spartans. Since Miller's Spartans are shown as the epitome of brute, butch coolness, everybody just knows they are real. John Wayne-type, 100% full red-blooded males.

Unfortunately, anybody even remotely knowledgeable with ancient Greece knows also that Spartans were as

much boy-lovers as the effete Athenians. Indeed, the cohesion of their army was due to the fact that the soldiers were lovers. So this insult to Athenians rings glaringly out of place.

So, either Miller has reduced his research on Thermopylae to the Big Little Book version of it, which makes this story descend into the category of so much Hollywood-style revisionism, or he's just twisting historical truth for the cheap thrill of including another homophobic barb. It's not his first; I doubt it'll be his last.

Still, to depict Leonidas and his men as homophobes is...

Well, it's Miller again. Gorgeous work, ugly subtexts. Sigh...

And here I was all set to enjoy 300

"Ah," indeed. Tap the knee and the foot kicks.

If I allowed my characters to express only my own attitudes and beliefs, my work would be pretty damn boring. If I wrote to please grievance groups, my work would be propaganda.

For the record: being a warrior class, the Spartans almost certainly did practice homosexuality. There's also evidence they tended to lie about it. It's not a big leap to postulate that they ridiculed their hedonistic Athenian rivals for something they themselves did. "Hypocrisy" is, after all, a word we got from the Greeks.

What's next? A letter claiming that, since the Spartans owned slaves and beat their young, I do the same?

The times we live in.

Jason Bickel
jibicke@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu

Today I received perhaps one of the most anticipated books in a long time. Ever since I found out that Frank Miller would be retelling the Spartans' story of Thermopylae, I have been hoping week after week that it would arrive. Today it did, and I am not disappointed — not by a long shot. First off, let me just say that I applaud the attempt to put historic events in comics form. As I am both an avid comics fan and a history major at Illinois State University, 300 meshes two of my interests in a stunning format. The tale itself is, well, Spartan in its simplicity, yet it still gives the reader the complete tale. It relates the Spartan credo and ethic better than many, many books I have read on the subject. The opening sequence of marching and the final scene of slaughtering the Persian envoy tell of that society in a more visceral, immediate way than any textbook can. This work, much like *Watchmen*, *Kingdom Come*, and *The Dark Knight Returns*, should go down as a work of history unto itself. You have a devoted fan in me. Mr. David MacDonald, my Ancient Greece professor, will be one of the first people I will share 300 with. I'll let you know his reactions before too long. I will be eagerly

anticipating the next issue

P.S. I really enjoyed the foreshadowing of things to come with the story of Leonidas and the wolf getting trapped in the narrow pass. I guess the wolf couldn't fit through those "hot gates."

Greg Spynidis
Bothell, WA

I was, about the same time you did *Dark Knight*, an avid comics reader. Time and more demanding commitments forced me to cut back pretty heavily over the last several years, though. One of those commitments, which is half the driving force of this letter, was following my profession as a stunt combatant and martial historian. Essentially, people pay me to create, perform, and consult on fights and wars from various periods in history. My specialties are pretty eclectic, including arts and tactics from dozens of periods and places all over the world, but at its heart is the ancient, classical Greek Age. What's more, specifically I focus on the personal and melee combat of Athens and Sparta from 100 to 300 B.C.

But I digress. I was saying how I don't read much in the way of comics anymore. The reason I tell you this is so you can understand how surprised I was when a friend and fellow stunt combatant came to me and told me about 300. "It's the battle at Thermopylae," he said "Leonidas and all." Instantly, I began bombarding him with questions: "Who's doing it?" "Are they going to wimp out on the Spartans?" "Please tell me they aren't going to butcher it!" He couldn't answer any of them, no one seemed to know much about it. The only information he had — and it did make me feel quite a bit better — was that Frank Miller was at the helm. I calmed down enough to sit back and wait. Because, you see, in addition to being a historian and combatant, I am also a Spartan: the son of a migrant from Arhangellos, a small village on the Southern border of the region. I was raised hearing stories of Leonidas, my heritage, and the courage at that pass. My blood still pounds at the thought of that battle. I wanted to see the story done right, or I wanted to see it done not at all.

So now I sit with the first issue to the side of me at my desk. I have read it twice just to be sure I didn't miss anything. And, while it is too late to make this long

story short, I can simply say I am pleased. Very pleased. As a matter of fact, I am ecstatic. It may be too early for me to know if you are going to keep true to history, and it may be too early for me to tell if you are going to pomp and fluff your way past one of the most controversial (referring to Spartan manliness and lifestyles) and important wars in Greek history; it is not too early for me to say you are doing a damned fine job so far. The art is fabulous and is beautifully understated when depicting some of the more adult aspects of that life. The writing is subtle, gripping, and immensely powerful. And, best of all, the story is essentially intact.

In closing, I would like to say thank you for a great comic and for bringing what I feel to be one of the greatest battles in history to the public's eye. I would also beg and plead that you don't give anyone the rights to the movie version until I can do it or at least be a part of it. Heh. And, finally, I leave you with what has always been my favorite alleged "quote" from the war, and a philosophy I try to live my life on. "The Persian arrows are so numerous that they fill the sky and block out the sun?" That is good; we shall get to fight in the shade."

Yeah, I've always loved that quote. There's nothing like putting together a script with all the best lines written for you — by history.

Scott St. Pierre
Peabody, MA

Your ass ages like wine . . . just like friggin' wine

Aw. Now you've got me blushing.

— Frank Miller



Next issue:

VICTORY





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**STEVE MILLER
& CYNTHIA JOHNSON**

PUBLICATION DESIGN
MARK COX

EDITOR
DIANA SCHUTZ

CHAPTER FIVE:
VICTORY





WHIPS
CRACK.

BARRAGE-ANS
HOWL.

THOSE BEHIND CRY
"FORWARD!"



THOSE IN
FRONT CRY
"BACK!"

THE
SECOND
DAY

ONE HUNDRED
NATIONS DESCEND
UPON US. THE AR-
MIES OF ALL ASIA.

FUNNELED INTO
THIS NARROW
CORRIDOR, THEIR
NUMBERS COUNT
FOR NOTHING.

THEY SHATTER
WITH EACH
ADVANCE.

KING XERXES IS
DISPLEASED.



HE REPRIMANDS
HIS GENERALS

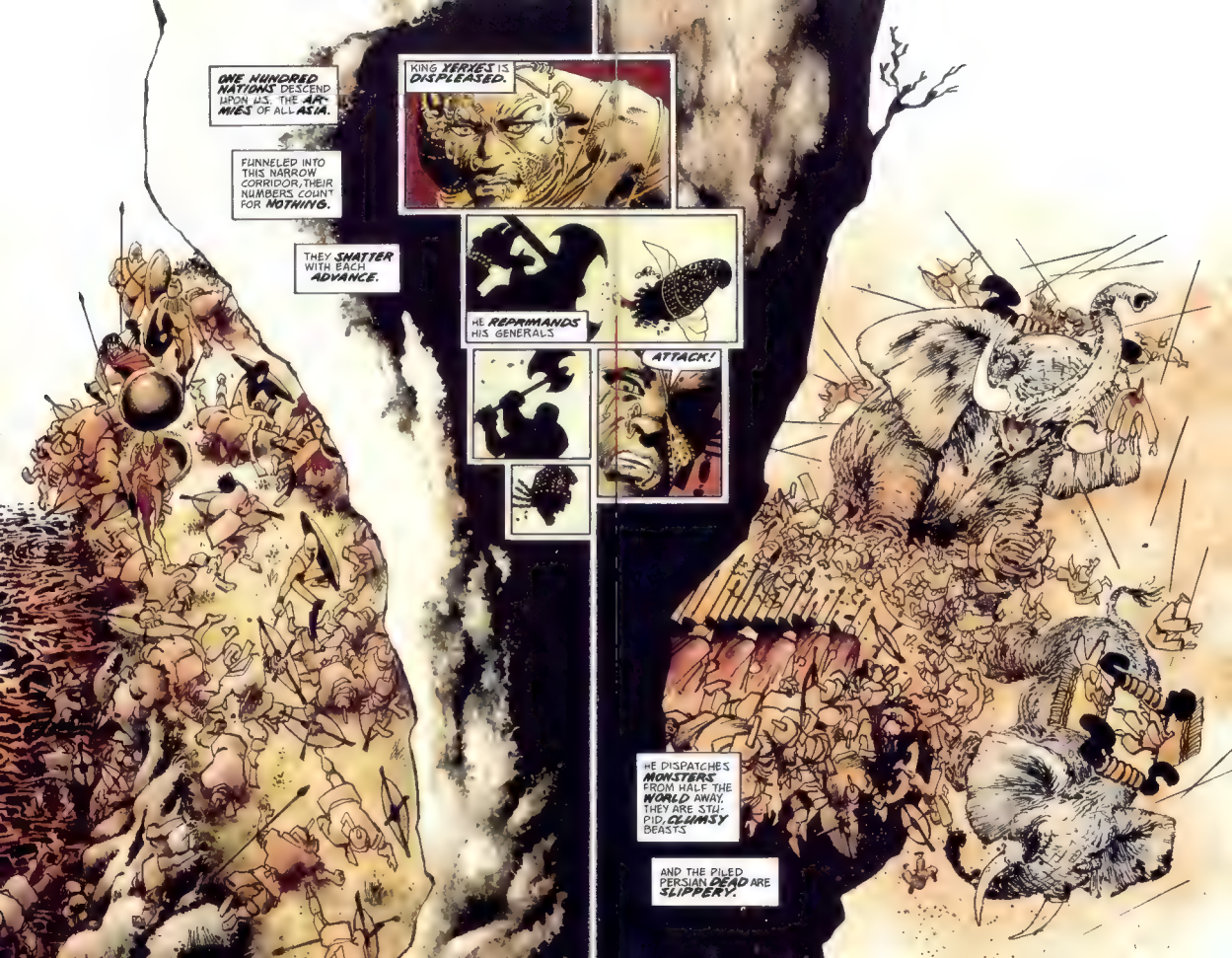


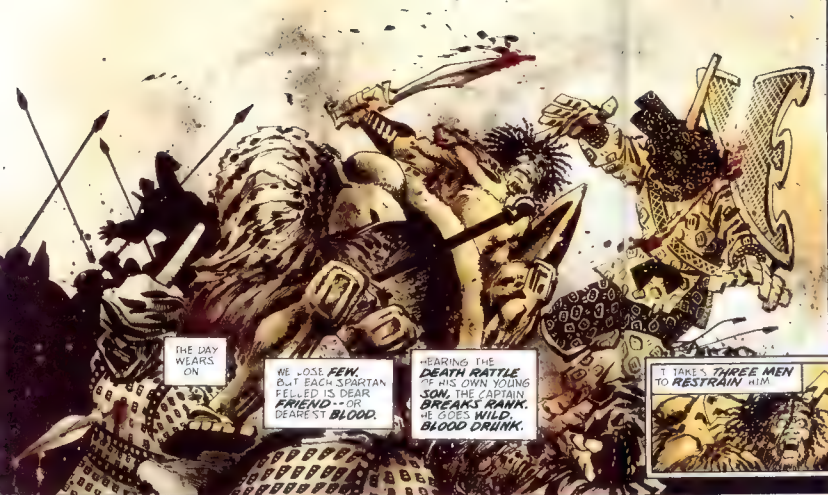
ATTACK!



HE DISPATCHES
MONSTERS
FROM HALF THE
WORLD AWAY.
THEY ARE STIL-
PID, CLUMSY
BEASTS

AND THE PILED-
UP PERSIAN DEAD ARE
SLIPPERY.



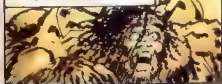


THE DAY
WEARS ON

WE LOSE FEW.
BUT EACH SPARTAN
FELL-ED IS DEAR
FRIEND--OR
DEAREST BLOOD.

HEARING THE
DEATH RATTLE
HIS OWN YOUNG
SON, THE CAPTAIN
BREAKS RANK.
HE GOES WILD.
BLOOD DRUNK.

T TAKE'S THREE MEN
TO RESTRAIN HIM

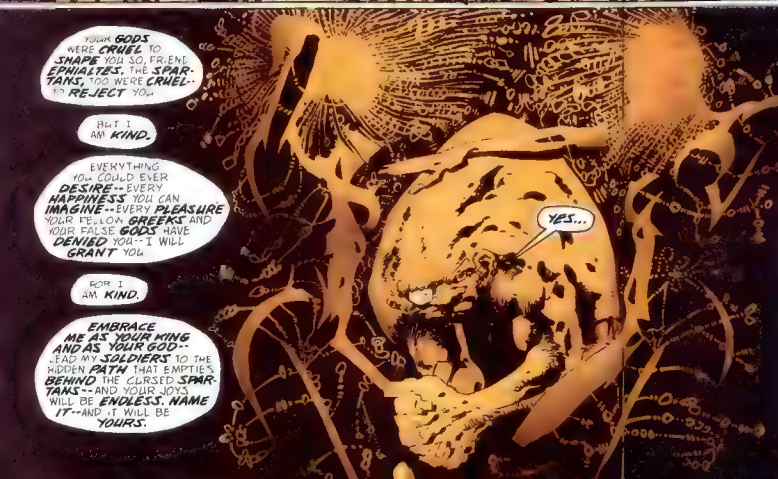


THE DAY
IS OURS

NO SONGS
ARE SUNG



THE
PERSIAN
CAMP
GOES
DEADLY
QUIET



YOUR GODS
WERE CRUEL TO
SHAPE YOU SO, FRIEND
EPHALTES, THE SPAR-
TANS YOU WERE CRUEL--
I REJECT YOU.

BUT I
AM KIND.

EVERYTHING
YOU COULD EVER
DESIRE--EVERY
HAPPINESS YOU CAN
IMAGINE--EVERY PLEASURE
YOUR FELLOW GREEKS AND
YOUR FALSE GODS HAVE
DENIED YOU--I WILL
GRANT YOU.

FOR I
AM KIND.

EMBRACE
ME AS YOUR KING
AND AS YOUR GOD--
LEAD MY SOLDIERS TO THE
HIDDEN PATHS THAT EMPTY
BEHIND THE CURSED SPAR-
TANS--AND YOUR JOYS
WILL BE ENDLESS. NAME
IT--AND IT WILL BE
YOURS.

YES...

I AM
KIND

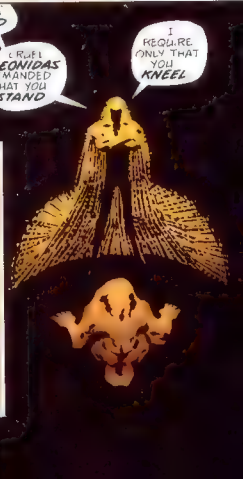
I FEEL
LEONIDAS
DEMANDED
THAT YOU
STAND

I
REQUIRE
ONLY THAT
YOU
KNEEL

DONE

I WANT IT ALL.
LAND, WEALTH,
WOMEN, AND ONE
THING MORE.

I WANT A
UNIFORM.



THE SECOND NIGHT

THE HOT GATES

INDICA I TRUST THAT SCRATCH HASN'T MADE YOU USE-LESS.

HARDY MY LORD IT'S JUST AN EYE THE GODS SAY FIT TO GRACE ME WITH A SPARE

DILIOS SPINS HIS STORIES

THE STORY OF MARATHON.

A PERFECT CHOICE

ATHENIANS, AMATEURS. POPPISH, FRILLY CITIZEN SOLDIERS. NOT A SPARTAN AMONG THEM-- AND STILL THEY DROVE THE PERSIANS BACK TO THE SEA AND AWAY!



BROTHERS! HOW CAN WE FLEE--AGAINST EYES SO FEARFUL OF COMBAT THEY C SHOW THEIR BACKSIDES TO ATHENIANS?



MUCH LAUGHTER

SHORT-LIVED

XERXES REPEATS HIS FATHER'S FOLLY TEN SUMMERS PAST, PERSIAN SLAVES SET SHORE AT THE PLAIN OF MARATHON, THERE TO FACE BRAVE GREEKS--AND OUR MIGHTIEST ALLY, THE HARSH, PROUD TERRAIN OF GREECE HERSELF.

THE PERSIANS STUMBLED FROM THEIR CROWDED SHIPS, THEIR LEGS CRAMPED, THEIR SOFT FEET RECOILING FROM THE ROCKY TON, THE SNAPPING, STABBING, THORNY UNDERBRUSH.

THEY LOOKED UP-- JAWS SLACK, HEARTS LURCHING UP THEIR THROATS. ARMORED MEN CHARGED AT THEM AT A FULL RUN-- FROM A FULL MILE DISTANT

ARMORED MEN. ATHENIANS, WITH THEIR LEATHER SKIRTS AND LOVINGLY SCULPTED BREECHES. WHAT A PRETTY PACK THEY MUST HAVE BEEN



LEONIDAS! WE ARE LINDONE!





UNDONE, I TELL YOU!
DESTROYED! A HUNCHBACK
TRAITOR HAS LED XERXES'
IMMORTALS TO THE HIDDEN GOAT
PATH-- BEHIND US! THE PHOCIANS
YOU POSTED THERE SCATTERED
WITHOUT A FIGHT! THIS BATTLE
IS OVER, LEONIDAS! BY
MORNING, THE IMMORTALS
WILL SURROUND US THE NOT GATES
WILL FALL!

THIS BATTLE IS
OVER WHEN I SAY IT
IS, DAXOS. SPARTANS!
PREPARE FOR
GLORY!

WHOA,
GIRL,
STEADY
STEADY



GLORY?!
HAVE YOU GONE
MAD? THERE'S
NO GLORY TO BE
HAD NOW! ONLY
RETREAT--OR
SURRENDER--OR
DEATH!

THAT'S AN EASY CHOICE
FOR US, ARCADIAN! SPARTANS
NEVER RETREAT!
SPARTANS NEVER
SURRENDER!

GO! SPREAD THE
WORD! LET EVERY
GREEK ASSEMBLED
KNOW THE BALD TRUTH
--LET EACH AMONG
THEM SEARCH HIS OWN
SOUL! AND WHILE
YOU'RE AT IT-- SEARCH
YOUR OWN!

DAMN YOU
DAMN YOU!

GODSPEED
LEONIDAS

AND GOOD-
BYE

CHILDREN
GATHER
ROUND

THE GODS FAVOR US.
COME TOMORROW, WE
LIGHT A FIRE THAT
WILL BURN IN THE
HEARTS OF FREE MEN
FOR ALL THE CENTU-
RIES YET TO BE

NO RETREAT.
NO SURRENDER.
THIS IS SPARTAN
LAW AND BY
SPARTAN LAW,
WE WILL STAND
AND FIGHT AND
DIE.

THE LAW. WE DO NOT SACRIFICE
THE RULE OF LAW TO
THE WILL AND WHIM OF MEN.
THAT IS THE OLD WAY. THE OLD,
SAD, STUPID WAY. THE WAY OF
XERXES AND EVERY CREATURE
LIKE HIM

A NEW AGE IS
BEGIN AN AGE OF GREAT
DEEDS. AN AGE OF REASON.
AN AGE OF JUSTICE. AN AGE
OF LAW. AND ALL WILL
KNOW THAT THREE HUN-
DRED SPARTANS GAVE
THEIR LAST BREATH
TO DEFEND IT

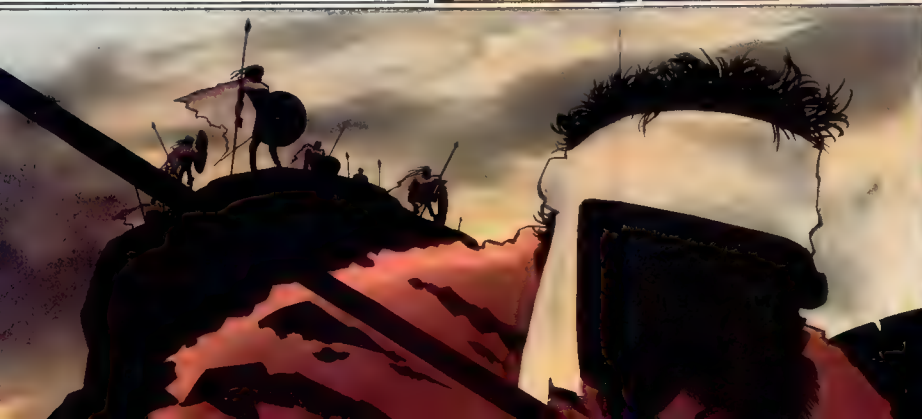
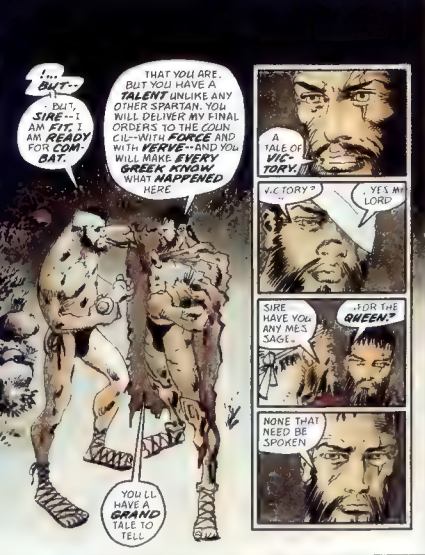
WE'RE WITH
YOU, SIR, TO THE
DEATH.

I DIDN'T ASK.
LEAVE DEMOC-
RACY TO THE
ATHENIANS,
BOY


YES, MY
LORD

...DILIOS
LET'S
TAKE A
WALK

YES, MY
LORD







JOHN
HARVEY: THAT
BUNCH WON'T GIVE
YOU TROUBLE. THEY'RE
NOT SPARTANS. JUST
A FEW STRAGGLING
GREEKS. SHOW
THEM YOUR SPEARS
AND THEY'LL SCATTER
LIKE THE PHOENIXES.
DID THERE'S NO
NEED TO KILL
THEM.

THE THIRD DAY



NO...
THERE'S NO
NEED...

...NO...

THERE'S NO
REASON...

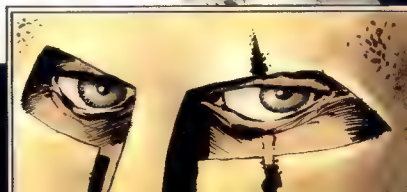
AND INTO THE
DEPTHS OF A
MONSTER'S
RETCHED SOUL.

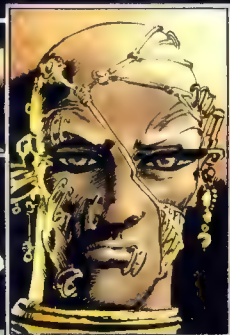
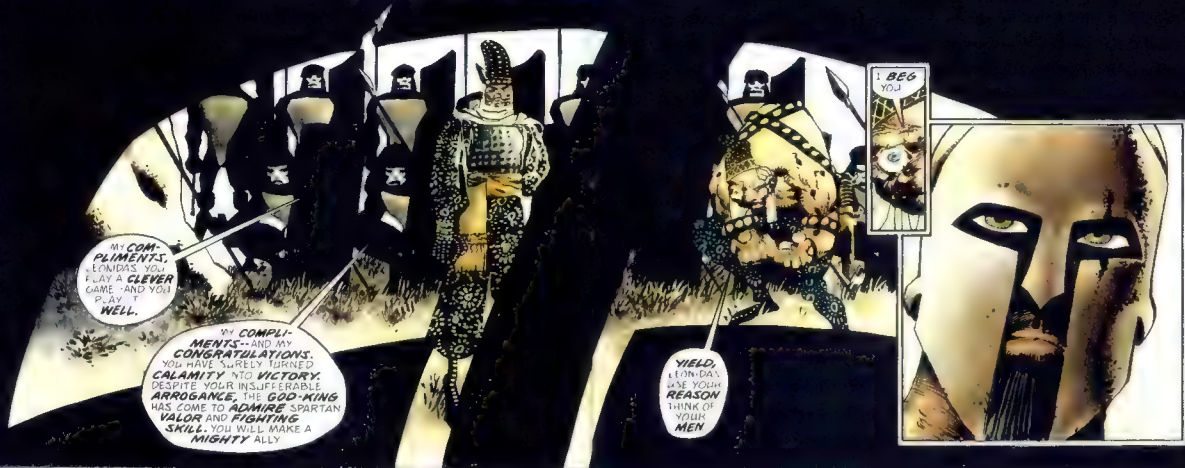
BRAVE THE SPANS
BRAVE AMATEURS.
THEY GIVE IT
THEIR BEST.

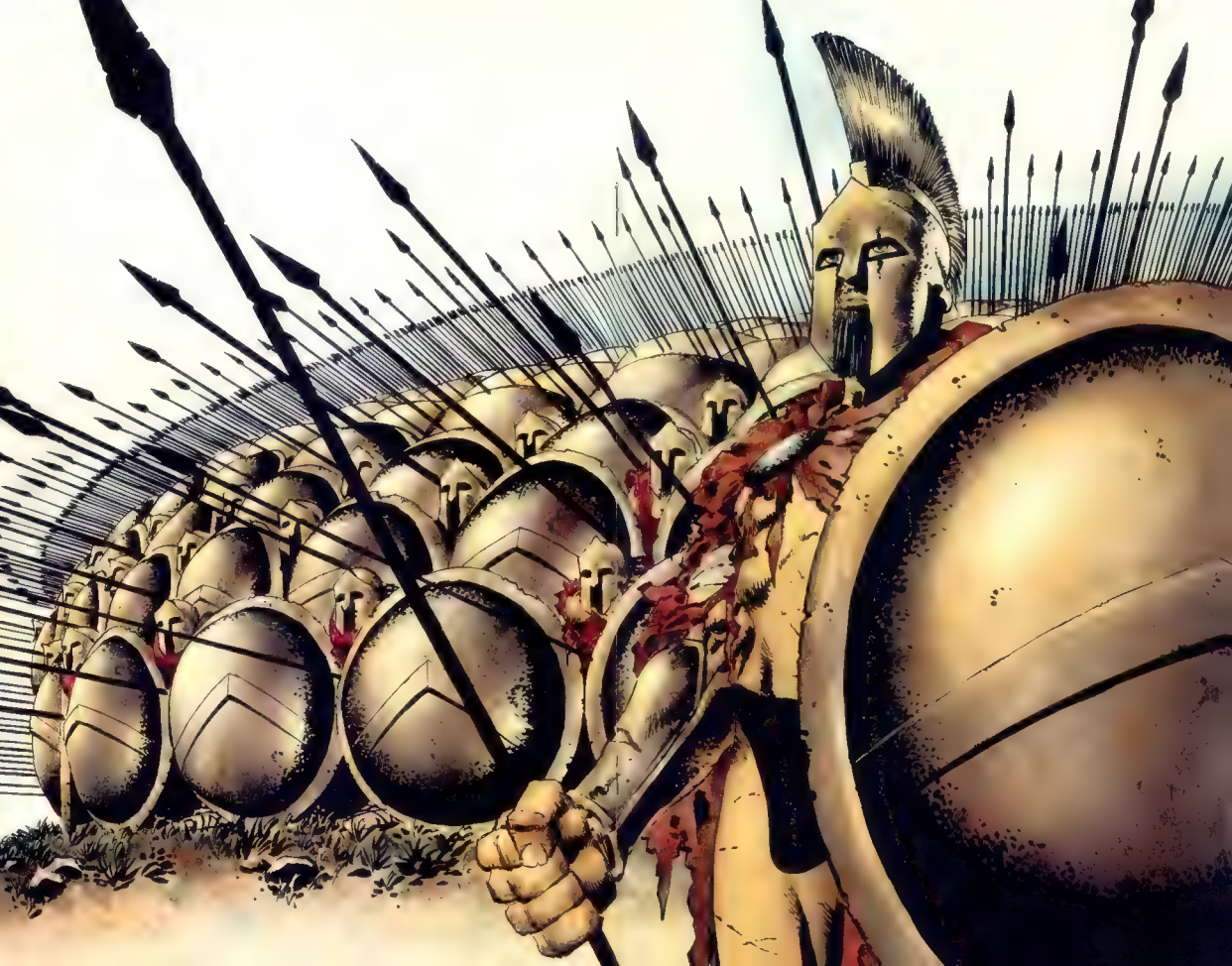
THEIR SAD CRIES
ECHO ACROSS
THE HILL TOPS.

HUNGRY FOR
REVENGE--
THIRSTY FOR
SPARTAN BLOOD--

THE IMMOR-
TALS CLOSE
IN FOR THE
KILL.







IT HAS BEEN
MORE THAN
FORTY YEARS
SINCE THE
WOLF AND THE
WINTER **COLD**.



NOW, AS THEN, IT IS NOT
FEAR THAT GRIPS HIM.
ONLY A **RESTLESS-**
NESS, A HEIGHTENED
SENSE OF THINGS.

THE SEABORNE **BREEZE** COOLLY
KISSING THE **SPREAD** AT HIS
CHEST AND **NECK**. **BULLS** CAW-
ING, **COMPLAINING** EVEN AS
THEY FEAST ON **THOUSANDS**
OF FLOATING **DEAD**.

THE STEADY **BREATHING**
OF THE **THREE HUNDRED**
BOYS AT HIS BACK - READY
TO **DIE** FOR HIM WITHOUT A
MOMENT'S PAUSE, EVERY
ONE OF THEM.

READY
TO **DIE**

THEY THINK THEY
KNOW WHAT THAT
MEANS.



HIS HELMET
S STIFLING.



TONK



KRANK

HIS SHIELD
S HEAVY.

YOUR
SPEAR.



HOW THERE
EPHIALTES

MAY YOU
LIVE FOR
EVER



YOUR SPEAR
LEONIDAS



TOK



STELIOS

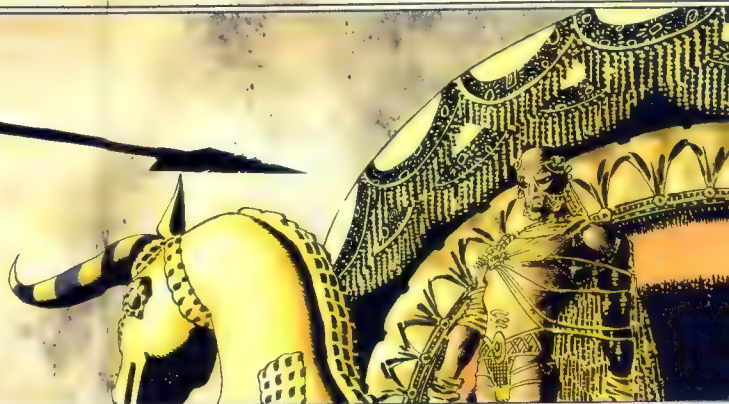


--DIE!

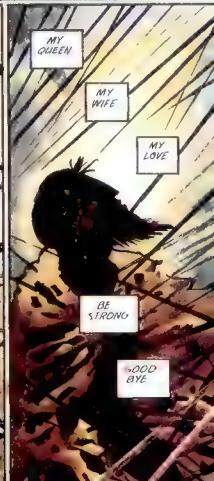
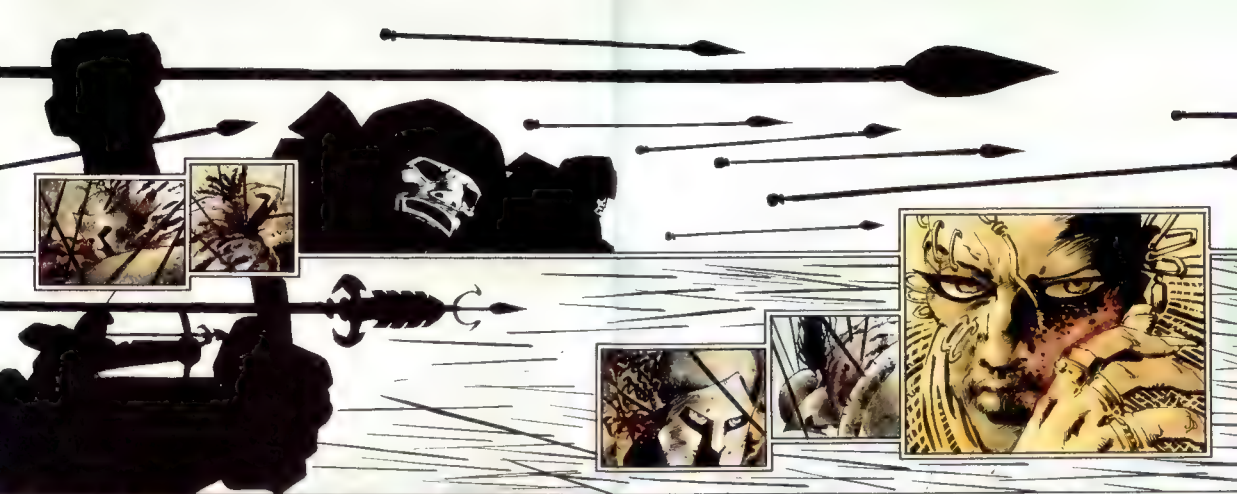
THE OLD ONES
CLAIM WE SPAR-
TANS DESCEND
FROM HERAKLES
HIMSELF.

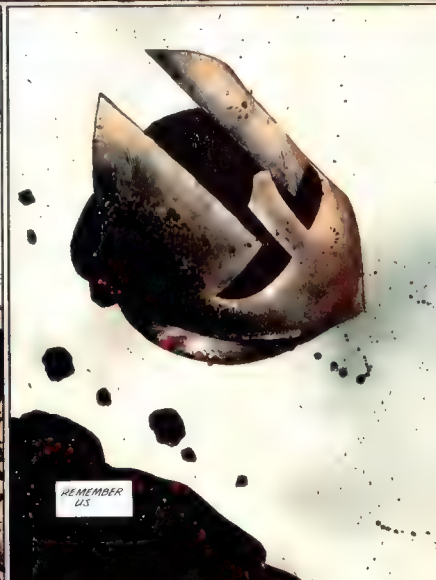
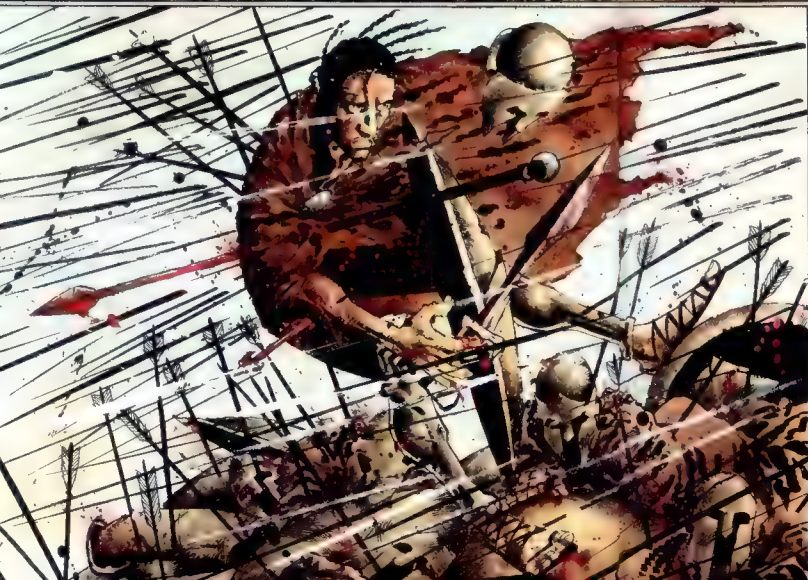
BOLD LEONIDAS
GIVES TESTAMENT
TO OUR BLOODLINE.
HIS ROAR IS LONG
AND LOUD AND FULL
OF LAUGHTER.

STARING DEATH
SQUARE IN THE
EYE--HE
LAUGHS.



KUNCH







SHOULD ANY
FREE SOUL
COME ACROSS
THIS PLACE--

IN ALL THE
COUNTLESS
CENTURIES
YET TO BE--

MAY OUR
VOICES WHIS-
PER TO YOU
FROM THE
AGELESS
STONES.

GO TELL THE
SPARTANS,
PASSERBY:

THAT HERE,
BY SPARTAN
LAW, WE LIE



AND SO MY KING DIED AND SO MY BROTHERS DIED, BARELY A YEAR AGO.

LONG I PONDERED MY KING'S CRYPTIC TALK OF VICTORY, AND TIME PROVED HIM WISE. FROM FREE GREEK TO FREE GREEK SPREAD THE WORD--



--THAT BOLD LEONIDAS AND HIS THREE HUNDRED, SO FAR FROM HOME, LAID DOWN THEIR LIVES, NOT JUST FOR SPARTA, BUT FOR ALL GREECE-- AND THE PROMISE OUR COUNTRY HOLDS.

OUR COUNTRY, OUR NATION, INSPIRED NOW, UNITED--SETTING ASIDE RIVALRIES, JOINING FORCES TO DRIVE THE INVADER FROM OUR SHORES.

FROM OUR SHORES-- AND FROM OUR SEAS.



CAPTAIN DILIOS SPINS HIS STORIES.

HIS BEST STORY

THE ONE ABOUT THE HOT GATES.

THE HOT GATES-- AND BEYOND.

IN THE WATERS OF SALAMIS, ATHENIAN SEAFARING MASTERY LED THE UNITED GREEK NAVY TO SHATTER THE PERSIAN ARMADA.



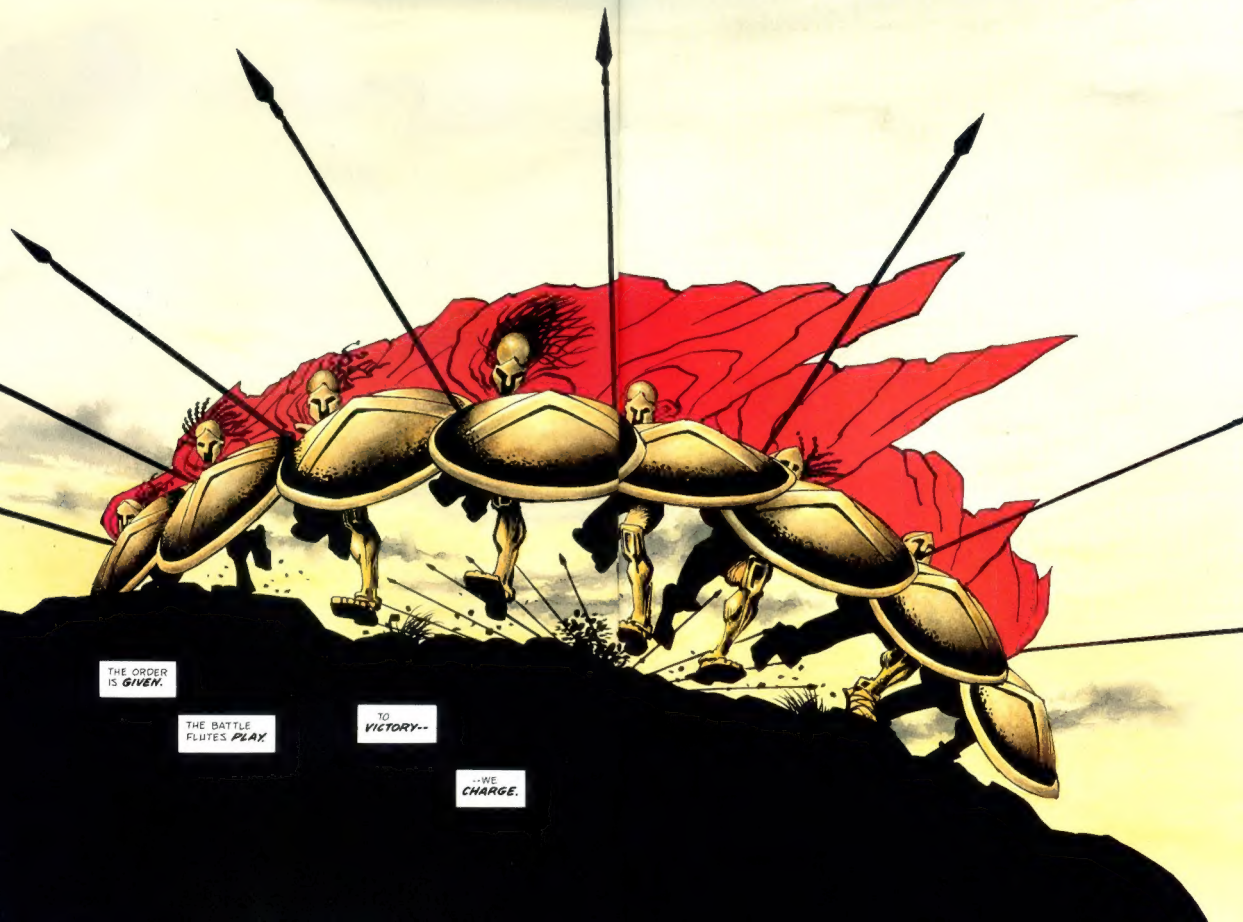
AND NOW-- HERE--ON THIS ROCKY, RAGGED PATCH OF GREECE WE CALL PLATAEA-- XERXES' HORDES FACE OBLITERATION!

THE BARBARIANS Huddle, SHEER TERROR GRIPPING TIGHT THEIR HEARTS WITH ICY FINGERS, KNOWING WHAT THEY SUFFERED AT THE SPEARS AND SWORDS OF THE THREE HUNDRED. THEY STARE ACROSS THIS PLAIN AT TEN THOUSAND SPARTANS-- COMMANDING THIRTY THOUSAND FREE GREEKS!



THE ENEMY OUTFNUMBERS US A PALTRY THREE TO ONE. GOOD ODDS FOR ANY GREEK. THIS DAY, WE RESCUE A WORLD FROM THE OLD, DARK, STUPID WAYS--AND WE USHER IN A FUTURE THAT IS SURELY BRIGHTER THAN ANY WE CAN IMAGINE. GIVE THANKS, MEN, TO LEONIDAS AND HIS BRAVE THREE HUNDRED--

--AND READY YOURSELVES FOR WAR!



THE ORDER
IS *GIVEN.*

THE BATTLE
FLUTES *PLAY*

TO
VICTORY--

--WE
CHARGE.

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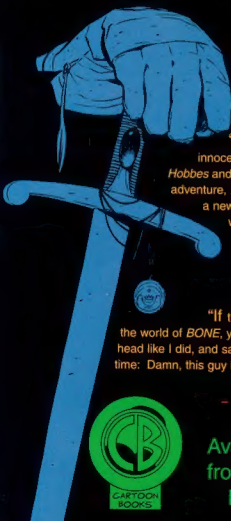
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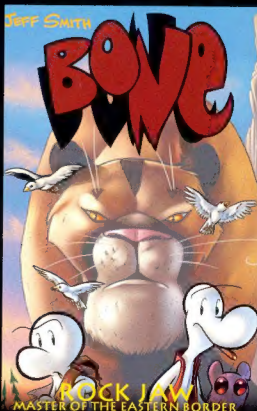
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